

School of Theology at Claremont



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# The Last of the Old West

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GEO. MECKLENBURG



Methodist  
Historical Society

*Southern California-Arizona  
Conference*

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# THE LAST OF THE OLD WEST

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*By*

**GEORGE MECKLENBURG**



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## Beautiful Montana

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Oh, beautiful Montana,  
With gorgeous sunset skies,  
You fill my heart with gladness  
At each new-born sunrise.

Your lofty mountain peaks sublime,  
Of purple-tinted hue,  
Lift their majestic heads toward skies  
Of rose and gray and blue.

In forest wild the elk and deer  
Abound where streamlets flow,  
The coyote, bear, and tricky fox,  
The fawn and gentle doe.

I love your flowers and happy birds  
That wing their flight so free  
O'er mellow fields of ripened corn,  
The haunt of lonely bee.

Your balsam, cedar, princess pine,  
Your trout in gleaming stream,  
Your winding roads of beauty rare  
Surpass my very dream.

Your sunlit plains and lowing kine  
With love my heart inspires,  
With thoughts of God in heaven above  
And his celestial choirs.

How can one be unhappy,  
E'en though your winds blow cold,  
When evening comes the wind is stilled  
And all the west is gold.

—*Florence E. Eakman.*

By permission.





## Acknowledgment

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To F. E. Henry we give the credit of suggesting that the spirit of the West could best be interpreted by true stories.



# Foreword

BY DR. CLARENCE TRUE WILSON

## A MOST NEGLECTED CHAPTER IN AMERICAN LIFE

RELIGIOUS prejudice, or the intolerance of secularity or the fear of rival sects, or perhaps all of these combined have produced a "mood of history" unmatched in the annals of any country outside of America. Our historical interpreters have had shackled minds and have not been free to tell the whole story of the glorious development of America.

The most outstanding and native characteristic of America is religion. A new people we are. Perhaps Europe does excel us in art and music and literature, but in religion we have been supreme. We have revelled in free religion. Every form and every mood and every tone of religion has had the opportunity of the freest expression under conditions free of tradition and free of religious laws. American religion grew out in the open.

No American institution is more universally in evidence than the church. The church came to the average western city long before the first train. If not, then the representative of the church came in on the cow-catcher of the first train that entered the city.

When life was new, when traditions had not been formed, when the imagination was open, when the heart was hopeful, when social idealism was high, then the church was on the ground ready to proclaim

## FOREWORD

the highest moral precepts. More than any other one factor in American life the church has made America what it is.

Yet it seems that one historical interpreter after the other has totally ignored the peculiar power of religion in the Americanizing of America. It seems the most neglected chapter in the westernizing of America.

This is one reason why America is inexplicable to the average European who looks in upon us and who writes books about us. For example, he cannot explain American prohibition. Dry sentiment is an enigma to him. Nor can our Europeanized East understand what is called "dry fanaticism." No one can explain this courageous attempt at moral reform who has not lived the spirit of moral and religious earnestness of religious America. The church on the Main Street of America, that Main Street stretching far into the south and the west and the north, has determined the attitude of America on these great moral questions. Many of these so-called moral questions have now become political questions and international questions.

When men who had said good-bye to the church came west they found the church there. When traditions holding men to the church were broken in making the great adventure of pioneering the church called men back to God. When the background of life in the West was the Indian, the trapper, and the cowboy, when there was no cultural and religious background, then the church came out west and built in a background and put God into the setting of the life of the West.

## FOREWORD

The story of how this was done has never been adequately written. Indeed it can never be fully told. The pioneers in religion were not historians. They were men of action and power for the moment. They trusted that the story would be written into a new Christian civilization of the West.

This little book does not purpose to write the neglected chapter on the influence of religion in the westernizing of the United States, but purposes only to call attention to this neglect and to open up some interesting new leads to the understanding of Main Street Americanism. The stories told in this book are true stories centered around the pioneer ministers of the Gospel in Montana.

No one sees life more intimately than the minister. No one has a better cross-section view of all life. The minister is admitted to the inner intimacies of community life. This is so, of course, in the East, but it is ten times more so in a new community. There he stands at the confessional day by day, be he Protestant or Catholic. The heart life and the home life are open to him as a book.

The constant ring of the doorbell of the pastor of the West may have spoiled the literary values of his sermons, but it has punctuated his addresses with human need and it has filled his discourses with the practical appeal of the heart-cry of humanity. Humanity is open, bare and raw in a pioneer country. The need for religion is immediate and terrific. Sin is open and blatant. Salvation becomes a real need and religion a reality, rather than a mere philosophy.





# Introduction

## THE EPIC STORY OF THE WEST

THE West stubbornly resisted civilization. The woods, the rivers, the deserts, the mountains, and the savage tribes and the vastness of it all almost baffled the first settlers. But the American pioneer, urged on by hunger for land and lured on by the spirit of adventure, finally by slow degrees bridged the rivers, bored the mountains, and made the desert blossom as a rose.

The resistance of the West to civilization and the final victory of the pioneer make up a story more significant to civilization than any previous migration story of the race. It is nothing less than the story of the making of the United States of America.

The last paragraph in that story can now be written. The last of the West has at last been fenced and ploughed and spoiled for adventure. The Ford car, the Methodist Church, the Rotary Club, the Ladies' Aid, the Boosters' Club, and the Radio have come to every community. The buffalo has been driven to the zoological gardens. The Indian is safe in the reservation, and the cowboy has gone to the Wild West show.

But the trek of America westward must not be forgotten. To understand the westernizing of America is to understand American institutions.

"The Covered Wagon" tried to give the secret of the power of the West on America, but failed. No

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picture and no book can adequately tell the effect of the trek westward on American life. This can only be lived.

There are some great frontier milestones which will help us to understand the westernizing of the United States. Once the West was everything outside of the Atlantic Coast. Prior to 1700 all Americans lived on the sea coast. Only a handful of adventurers dared to go beyond that. Between 1700 and 1763 the population pushed up the rivers as far as the waterfalls of the main streams. There was no real settlement above the waterfalls.

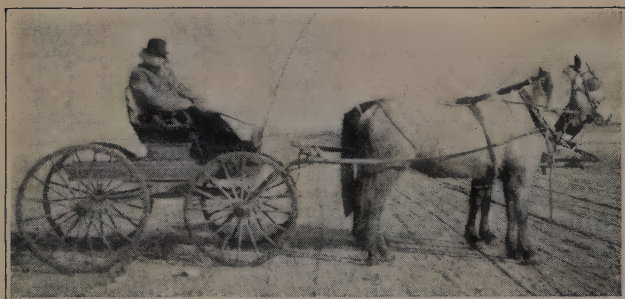
The year 1763 marks a real milestone in American expansion. In that year a government road was built from the Potomac to the Ohio River at Wheeling. This wagon road opened up a vast territory for settlement. The next important date is 1803. This is the year of the Louisiana Purchase. This purchase settled forever the disputed policy about the expansion of our country. From now on it became the settled policy that the United States must expand to the Pacific Coast.

In considering the growth of our country and the movement of the population westward, we must understand and consider the inborn craving for land which was very strong in the Anglo-Saxon people. People wanted land of their own and they wanted permanent titles to this land. The Harrison Land Act was passed in 1800. By this act the United States became a partner with everyone that bought land. A new section of land was opened up and sold in three-hundred-and-sixty-acre tracts at auction. This

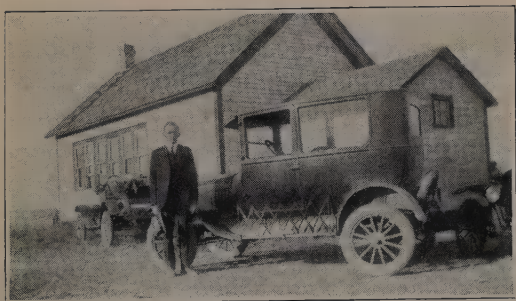
## Three Generations of the Old and the New West



W. W. Van Orsdel rode horseback all over Montana, preaching the Gospel and laying the foundations of the Church everywhere in the early days of Montana.



The author drove cayuse horses, serving twelve preaching appointments, trying to cope with the "riot of homesteading."



Ed. Kistler in his Ford car typifies the new generation of automobile itinerants fighting the growing paganism of the new West





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Land Act was in operation until Abraham Lincoln signed the Homestead Act in 1862. By this act every family was given the opportunity of securing 160 acres of land free of cost.

Then we must also understand that the American frontier was not a geographical line so much as it was a process or a social laboratory. A frontiersman from New England would settle in Ohio, for example. As soon as he cleared a bit of land and had cared for the physical needs of the family he thought of the school and the church, and then he thought of government. After twenty-five years the first born on the land would be married and they would go on into newer regions farther west and establish homes and repeat the experiences of their parents. This process has been going on in America for nearly two centuries. Each new neighborhood was able to challenge the social values of the past, and it was this process generation after generation in ever new communities that made America what America is to-day.

Even the story of our political development is unintelligible to one who does not understand pioneering. It was the West that broke down the States Rights idea and the conservatism of the East. The West needed roads and every improvement and all sorts of aid from the Federal Government. The building of the Cumberland National Road from Wheeling westward was the first great symbol of Federal power.

It was the people of the West who forced President Thomas Jefferson to take a stand on the expansion of the United States westward. The westerner simply

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said that the President must act or he would act independently of him and establish a new nation in the west. Good common sense prompted Thomas Jefferson to go ahead in spite of his States Rights leanings and purchase the Louisiana Territory for \$15,000,000. But for the spirit of the West we might never have developed our great United States. Several rival and warring sovereignties might now be occupying this vast territory.

After the purchase was made, Thomas Jefferson ordered an exploration into the country from the Mississippi River through the Missouri River to the Pacific Coast. This is the origin of the Lewis and Clarke Expedition. Lewis and Clarke with a company of twenty-six men left St. Louis in 1805 in three boats. Finally they reached the Yellowstone River in Montana. Then they came to the Milk River. Their recorded experiences are among the most interesting stories of American pioneering. When they reached the Marias River they could not tell which was the Marias River and which was the Missouri. The Indians along the way told them there was a great waterfall up the Missouri River. After a few days of exploration up the Marias River they came to the conclusion that the other branch was the Missouri.

On a beautiful day in June, Lewis first saw the great falls in the Missouri River. They had great difficulty in getting by the twelve miles of waterfalls up to what is now Great Falls City. With infinite pains they made little wagons from trees which they found along the river. They worked their way up to

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Helena, then up to Three Forks, then across the Lolo Pass in the Bitter Root Mountains, and then through the Columbia River Valley to the Pacific.

The epic story of pioneer life, of exploration, conquest, and settlement, has been written and rewritten in the lives of great men. They were lured on by the challenge of the unknown. For the most part the advance guard of these movements were daring men, bent on discovery, exploration, conquest, determined to subdue the perils of the wilderness, the lurking savages, and nature's unfriendly forces. Many times the struggle was a hard and pitiless one. No quarter was asked and seldom was it given. All the sterner qualities of manhood were required to face the dangers of those early days. Certain types of character were developed and proved by the very effort demanded. The scout, the ranger, the trapper, the miner, the cattleman, the homesteader, these were all a vital part of each westward movement. And in this motley company, motivated by quite a different passion, were to be found humble men of God, Sky Pilots of the Infinite, restraining, guiding, ennobling the rude primitive life of which they formed a part.

A true historian must give a large place in the development of the West to missionary activity, both Protestant and Roman Catholic. A very interesting chapter in frontier history is that of the settlement of Oregon by Methodists. They were the first to enter this territory for missionary work. In 1836 Marcus Whitman with his bride set up a mission at the place where the Snake River joins the Columbia River. He taught religion and Agriculture

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to the Indians, and discovered the wonderful fertility of Oregon soil. He told the story of Oregon in letters to people in the East and soon they came to Oregon in great caravans.

In time the Pacific slope was settled and then the tide of pioneering turned backward to meet a new oncoming tide from north and south and east. These tides met and mingled in Montana, the last of the West. Montana, the "land of shining mountains," was the last State to feel the impact of advancing civilization. Behind her far-flung plains, her mystifying foothills, lofty mountains, towering, rugged, defiant, she seemed to say, "Conquer me if you can." By long, well-guarded trails, tides of migrations had poured through Montana to settle Washington, Oregon, California, but Montana was still unconquered. Indian tribes still peopled her secluded valleys. An early explorer gazing from a lofty eminence upon the upper reaches of the Yellowstone said in awed tone to his companion, "The hand of God." A hand open to receive, strong to grasp, ready to strike the arrogant intruder, but withal a hand ready to help those who come in quiet trust and confidence.

Here the adventurer braving the unknown, the fur trader unscrupulous in trade, the miner bent on finding gold, the cattle-men and the sheepmen greedy of range, the homesteader trying to eke out a meagre living, the gambler, the highwayman, the vigilante, and the preacher, all thrown together in the great crucible of human values, to determine whether man or nature, vice or virtue, love or greed, God or evil

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would eventually triumph. And always in the background there hovered the grim spectres of Indian attack, long trails, hard winters, sickness far from a doctor's care, loneliness and danger. And here as elsewhere in the conquest of the West the kindly minister of God was found. Among the Catholics, Father Ravalli and St. Ignatius; among the Methodists, Thomas Corwin Iliff, the gospel scout; William Wesley Van Orsdel, the missionary of God; F. A. Riffin and Jacob Mills, Kingdom prospectors; Job Little, George King, and a host of others, Kingdom builders.

These men found life in the raw. They dealt with elemental forces. It was all a grim, hard struggle for survival. Loneliness, hardship, privation, and danger faced them on every side. Manhood alone counted. Men who would speak for God must be men of simple faith and deep sincerity. Frontiersmen cared not for creed or dogma or doctrine. Could Christ help a man on the long trail? Could he make a man more of a man amid the daily temptations and dangers? These were the only questions that mattered. As the man shot in a running fight with the Indians said to the preacher bending over him, "If your God can do anything fer a feller like me, tell him to do it quick." Those early preachers of the gospel cast long shadows behind them, down through the years, and broken men, sinful men, penitent men and women have found forgiveness and healing through the message of their lives.





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## PART ONE

THE WESTERNIZING OF A TENDERFOOT COLLEGE  
AND SEMINARY GRADUATE

THE THEOLOGY OF THE GREAT OUTDOORS OF THE  
LAST OF THE WEST

THE TRAGEDY AND THE HEARTBREAK OF THE  
FIRST SETTLERS

WESTERN STORIES THAT REALLY HAPPENED



## CHAPTER I

# A City Not On the Map

HE WAS impatient with the conventional church of the East. It seemed to him the church lacked originality and creative spirituality. He did not want to settle down to a comfortable pastorate preaching to people who went to church just because church attendance was customary and proper. He wanted a church where grandfather had not always attended. He was tired of hearing that this is the church where Aunt Jane had been married. He was tired of traditional Christianity. He almost rebelled against it. He dreamed of a place where people came to church to worship God even though neighbors did not come. He wanted to see a more vitally spiritual expression of the religion of Jesus Christ.

He was a student in a Boston seminary. A strange new life was flooding in upon some of our seminaries. New hopes, new methods, strange doctrines came in upon the students in engulfing waves. Some lost their grip and went down. Others arose determined to conquer a larger world for Christianity. It was a day of uncomfortable religious stirrings. The spirit of God was upon the young men. And they wanted prophesy.

During his seminary days he was serving a little New England church in a little factory town. To his radical proposals they usually replied, "We never

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did it that way before." That usually ended all efforts to adjust the church to modern needs.

This little community had no chance. Small factories, small stores, small wages. The adventurous had gone away. Some had gone to the big cities. Some had gone "out West."

These people were cramped and suppressed. Emotionally and religiously they were starved. No one dared to think. No one dared to live his own life.

The sky was clamped down close on this little town. They were good people fitting into little niches, doing useful work, making shoe strings in a day when the women wore high-laced shoes.

When seminary days were over he was invited to stay on at the little church. He was even offered a larger and more fashionable church. But the challenge of the great West was upon him.

He wanted to go out where the West begins. Out where civilization is new. Out where there are no backgrounds, and no stultifying traditions. Out where men dare to disbelieve. Where men dare to believe. Out where religion must stand on its own feet. Out where the church is not endowed or supported by a few rich families. Where men will not walk across the street to hear a man just because he is minister, but where they go miles to hear a man with a message from God.

Riding in the crowded subways of Boston he dreamed of the wider horizons of "Out Where the West Begins." Cramming for examinations in the classical halls of learning could not deaden the zest

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for adventure and for freedom in the last of God's new world.

And the call from the West came. The call was clearer than his call to the ministry. Montana, the Empire State, was calling for young men. Letters came, dripping with sacrificial challenges to men who would take the risk. "We are building cities over night." "People are crowding in upon us from every State." "Come out to the last of the great West. Come out and grow up with a new civilization." "We are building a new empire here in Montana. Come out and help us make it Christian."

So ran the letters from church leaders and empire builders of the West. The letters were so different. No meticulous attention to style. No nice, round-about, guarded phraseology. It was always a spear thrust. It was out from the shoulder. It was he-man stuff in the name of religion. It thrilled the student from Boston. So he pulled up stakes and went west.

Montana, an empire in size. Prairie, mountains, timberland, mining! This fascinating land broke in on the student preacher through a train window one early morning. It was a sunrise such as can only be seen in the West. The whole sky splashed in glory. The air was great. It seemed as if he never could breathe enough of it. It seemed like the very air felt relief from the conventionalities of life.

Before him he saw vast fields of sage brush on a rolling prairie. Every now and then a homestead shack, a patch of field, and a herd of cattle. The train rushed on and on. A whole day and another day, and still he was in Montana.

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This was in 1911. It was harvest time. And what a harvest! The grain was so heavy it appeared like shocks of wheat had been hauled up and stacked in one field. Some fields yielded seventy-five bushels of wheat per acre. And then the wonderful grass, the bunch grass which fattened cattle on their feet in the out-of-doors all winter.

A real-estate man was on the train. He wore a big wide white hat. He was rather well dressed. He was a cross between the rough pioneer Westerner and the smooth Easterner.

He spied the preacher from Boston. Somebody looking for free land and a chance to build a home he thought. He was soon in lively conversation with him. He was saying: "There is no State like Montana. Millions of people from the crowded East are on their way here. This land is the best wheat land on earth. Then the climate. Notice we have no one in our cemeteries. One city had to find a drunken loafer to die so they could start their burial ground. This land now selling for \$15 will some day sell for \$300. And see what you can grow. Three hundred bushels of potatoes to the acre and no weeds. Take a homestead and prove it up in a few months. Raise a crop to pay all expenses. You can become independent in a year. Then think of the resources of this State in ore and timber and water power. Great cities will grow up here that will consume all the crops that we raise."

The real-estate huckster said this and more, and he said it with contagious enthusiasm. The student preacher looked at him wistfully. He was not thinking

## A CITY NOT ON THE MAP

of wheat or homesteads or money profits. He heard the tramp of the oncoming army of men and women and children who were being lured by clever advertising and glorious promises. He was thinking of the problems of establishing the church, the Sunday school. How to build up a moral background for countless communities springing up everywhere. That was the problem as he saw it.

After two days and a night of travel through this glorious new empire he arrived at the seat of the annual conference of his church. No more idyllic place for a religious retreat could be imagined. It was high among the glorious granitic mountains. It was so high it seemed near heaven. One could almost mount one of the peaks and "tickle the toes of the angels." The little new western city was nestled cozily in the mountains at the end of a lake thirty miles long. It was thirty miles of shining blue with the reflection of twelve-thousand-foot-high mountains down in the waters.

That conference of ministers and laymen rather took the new preacher from Boston off his feet. Here he found earnest cowboy preachers with little education, but with religious passion and a faith that might remove mountains. Here he saw white-haired saints who had given thirty years of their lives ministering to a scattered population of miners and cattle men. He met men who could tell stories that matched the heroism of the early apostles. Here he met trained college and seminary graduates who were throwing their lives into the home missionary work with an abandon and sacrifice rarely known in missionary

## THE LAST OF THE OLD WEST

annals. Here he met astute missionary strategists and men of God who studied the maps of the real-estate men and listened to the hum of the hammers as the railroad spikes were driven. "Establishing the Kingdom." "Measuring up to the needs of the future." "Locating churches in strategic spots." "Meeting the demand for the Gospel in out-of-the-way communities." These were expressions he heard repeatedly at the conference.

The meetings of the conference were so informal, so spiritual, so gloriously free, and so lacking in wire pulling and politics that the new preacher was completely taken in. He pledged to give of his best to the winning of the West.

He had come out to the West to reform, to challenge, to build new. He was disarmed. He began to wonder whether he was big enough for the West. Was his theology broad enough to preach to congregations composed of Protestants, Jews, and Catholics? Was his faith grounded enough to convince folks who had said "Good-bye, God," when they left Iowa and Missouri? Was his knowledge of churches and church organizations such that he could become a church builder? Did he have resources enough to manage and live in communities scrambling to get a foothold? What could he do in communities where the people were more interested in new bridges than new churches?

It was a chastened and humbled Boston seminary graduate who received his appointment to go to Valier, Montana, to preach the Gospel.

The Conference closed Sunday evening. Monday



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morning the entire Conference boarded the big flat boat for the thirty-mile ride to the railroad town at the other end of the lake.

"Where is Valier, I do not find it on the map?" he exclaimed after perusing the map and failing to find his appointment. One of the veteran preachers of this state said, "It is likely not on the map. Map-makers can't keep up to the rapid growth of this state. We grow cities over night out here."

And so it was. Valier was a piece of boundless, stakeless prairie only a few months before. Now it had a population of one thousand people. Half of the people lived in tents and temporary shacks.

It took two long days to get to this appointment. It was at the end of a little private railroad only twenty miles long. The engine got off the track three times in making the twenty-mile trip. Passengers helped the little old engine back on the track.

And then Valier came into view. It was raining. It began to snow. It was only September first. Was this the object of his dreams? Was this what he had trained to be a minister for these long years? Was this the place to try out his new ideas in preaching the Gospel? Was this the place free from traditions and backgrounds? Would he ever hear, "It has never been done that way before"?

He stepped off the train. Alone, unknown, unheralded, unwanted. And it continued to rain. There was no paving, no sidewalk. Mud, mud, mud, six inches deep everywhere. The sound of the hammer was everywhere. Everybody was building houses. Little bungalow houses. Built for the day

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only. No one expected to stay long. Get rich quick and go back East. That was in the air. And it continued to rain. It had now rained for two days.

Not knowing anyone, he stepped into the "Big Store." There he picked out a kindly-looking clerk and announced himself as the new preacher. The clerk shrugged his shoulders and said, "That's so" and went off waiting on a customer.

The people were in a feverish rush. Nobody noticed anyone being new. All were new. Nobody knew anybody else. All were rushing for themselves. Everything was high-priced, money was easy, wages were high; and the future seemed bright. Everybody predicted Valier would have fifty thousand people in two years. "Get land, buy lots, grab now when grabbing is good." These thoughts were in everyone's mind.

This was the place to which an impractical theological student, crammed with a theoretical education, had come to preach. Preach what? To preach that: "He that is first shall be last." "What shall it profit a man if he does get land and lots if he loses his soul in the getting of it."

Then he went to the hotel. There is no more interesting institution than a western hotel, or any small-town hotel for that matter. This was a big hotel. It was built by the "boom." An eastern company was booming the city and selling irrigated land in forty-acre lots. The company owned every lot in the city to begin with. This company spent a mint of money in advertising the "project" as they called it.

## A CITY NOT ON THE MAP

Though the hotel was big, there was no room in the inn for the new preacher. "In two weeks we may have a room for you," said the curt clerk at the desk. A great land-selling Labor Day celebration was being promoted. People had come from every State in the Union. There was never a more cosmopolitan group assembled this side of heaven. The preacher discovered later that this city of one thousand had one hundred college graduates. The flower of adventure-loving America was there.

What would the preacher do? Where would he sleep? He could not find a soul interested in his coming or in his work.

The city boomers had built a church. No great city, they said, could be without a church. And it was to be one church. No conflict of denominations in this new city. Catholic or Protestant was all the same to the city boosters. To get a preacher they had turned the church over to denominational ownership and management. But how to run a church they knew not.

So the preacher bought a mattress and blankets and set up housekeeping in the new church. After a late supper in a sloppy restaurant charging Waldorf Astoria prices he went to bed in a corner of the church. And it kept on raining. It rained harder and harder. It pattered in minor key on the roof. It was almost spooky, this big empty church.

That night the preacher thought and thought and thought. What would he do? He had his education. He was supposed to know how to conduct a church. But here nobody seemed to care. Who

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would pay the salary? Who would pass the collection plate? Who would sing in the choir? How to start a Ladies' Aid Society? How get money to build a parsonage for his wife, who was now visiting relatives in the East? How to begin? What would he do first? What would Saint Paul do here? How get a crowd? All this and more whirled through his mind as he tossed and tossed through that night as it rained and rained and rained.

All at once, as by a bolt of lightning from the clouded sky, came a thought. It was a thought charged and dynamic. It came in answer to intensest prayer. It came to a mind wrestling with the beasts of temptation. It came at the time when he was tempted to pack up and go back to a sheltered and traditionalized pulpit of the East.

This new thought was luminous. It was from God. The glow of it has not diminished in all the intervening years. It was this, "Don't worry about yourself, find out what the people need most, serve them and you will get on."

In total exhaustion and in the glow of this thought he fell asleep. When he awoke it was light and it was raining sleet. The level prairie had six inches of water and snow.

## CHAPTER II

### 250 Indians in the Church

"FIND out what the people need most, supply that need and you need not worry about yourself." That was a lofty stand for the tenderfoot preacher to take as he was beginning his pastorate in the booming irrigation town of Montana. This thought dominated his being as he got up the first morning in the improvised bedroom in the church. It rang in his ears as he slushed through six inches of water to find a restaurant.

Being of a practical turn of mind he could not linger long over the inspiration of a great idea without getting busy working it out. The real problem was now to determine what the people needed most.

What is the real need of a thousand souls bent feverishly on building homes and becoming rich in a year? How could he appeal to a people coming from every state in the Union and representing every grade of society? There were adventurers, there were impractical idealists attracted by advertisements picturing a Utopia. There were hard-headed business men and rough-neck toughs. There were college men and men who could not read or write. A survey taken by the preacher later disclosed that thirty-seven denominations were represented in the population, but most of them had taken a vacation from church and church work.

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"What do these people need most?" He had pondered this a hundred times when he entered the little restaurant for breakfast. He was seated at a big table. Some hungry working men were bolting a breakfast and talking loudly.

They were talking about the Indians. Six hundred Indians were in the city. They were camped just outside the town in Indian village style. The tents were placed by streets and avenues between the town and the pretty lake just a few blocks away. The Indians were there with their women, children, ponies, dogs, and chickens.

Why this Indian village outside of Valier? The land company owning all the irrigated land over a stretch of one hundred miles had brought a whole tribe of Indians for advertising the land. They were brought in from the Blackfeet Indian Reservation nearby.

A great Labor Day celebration was to be staged. Real Indians were to provide the program with their tom tom dances. People traveled two thousand miles to see this show and to buy land.

But it kept on raining. It would not stop raining. The gumbo soil would hold no more moisture. The Indians could not keep dry in the tents. The women and children were catching colds. Two children had died.

The men at the table told how the city council had wrestled with the Indian question the evening before, but could find no place for them. The town was crowded to the last inch of space.

Again a thought flashed into the mind of the new

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preacher. "To save the Indians may be your first task. That is what is needed most just now."

It was a good thing for the preacher to learn right at the beginning of his ministry how to translate inspirations into the doing of commonplace and near-at-hand tasks. Too often we try in some nebulous way, sometimes labeled spiritual way, to carry out service to mankind.

Well, the Indians were here. There were six hundred of them. They were near at hand and they were dying.

So the preacher immediately visited the Indian camp to survey the conditions. He found "Big Chief Little Bear." He asked him how he was getting along. The chief said in broken English, "Bad, everything bad, rain, too much rain, teepee wet, bed wet, women sick, children die."

A plan of campaign for saving the Indians was formed on the spot. "How would you like to take your women and children and put them in my church?" The Big Chief had no words, but manifested his joy by throwing his arms around the preacher and hugging him. No Indian ever showed more emotion.

The loose chairs of the church were piled out in the rain, and in less than fifteen minutes 250 Indian women and children had been taken into the church. The big round oak stove in the center of the church was kept red hot to dry the Indians out. The Indians stayed in the church ten days. The Indians were saved.

A brilliant newspaper man from New York City was editing a first-class newspaper that would be a

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credit to a city of one hundred thousand people. This paper was sent to every State in the Union to boost the irrigation project and the sale of this land.

This editor heard the story of how the preacher had saved the Indians after the city fathers had failed. He saw in this a good story. It was one he felt would take with eastern readers. So he got the life story of the preacher. Educated, from Boston, that's the type of people who come West. Then he got the names of six Indians who were Carlisle College graduates. He got each one to say what he thought of the preacher. Of course, the Indians in the most extravagant language praised the preacher. This story, three columns wide, appeared on the front page of this newspaper of the "Project."

Talk about free publicity. The first Sunday the Indians had possession of the church. The next Sunday the church was crowded and hundreds of people turned away. Everybody wanted to see this new preacher from Boston. The talk of the town was, "A preacher has come west who has real and practical religion."

Time went on, the rain stopped, and the Indians went home to the reservation. Many choice christian people were found in the community. A parsonage was built and the preacher went on trying to discover, "what the people needed most."



## CHAPTER III

# And We Buried Jim

JIM was a typical Western sheep herder. Jim was a common drunkard. But he was the most popular man in town. Jim was generous. He was jovial. Every child and every dog loved Jim.

Dupuyer, Montana, was Jim's town. This was one of the oldest towns of the State. Dupuyer lay beautifully in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. A fine trout stream flowed through the town. There were nine saloons, two general stores, two blacksmith shops, a school house, a parsonage, and some straggling, ramshackle unpainted houses.

Like many western towns, Dupuyer had flourished greatly in the heyday of the cattle men. Cowboys had for years made Dupuyer their headquarters. Great pack trains and prairie schooners came through Dupuyer. Business was good in the olden days it was said. Drinking and drunkenness were taken for granted. Gambling was a business as well as a pastime. Now the farmer was encroaching upon the precincts of the sheep men and the cattle men. Vast estates were being divided into farms of 160 acres. People were coming from everywhere to take up what was called free land under the Homestead Act. This was playing havoc with the cattle and sheep business all over the West. Many a fight was staged between the oldtimers and the tenderfeet who were

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coming from the East. The fastnesses and holdings of a generation of the oldtimers were not given up freely and willingly to the impractical newcomers who were flocking in by the tens of thousands.

But Dupuyer was still holding out as a center for cattle men and sheep men. It was the last of the great and woolly West. In Dupuyer we still had the reign of the sheep herder and the cowboy. In the common language of the people we still heard the words "round-up," "pinto," "cayuse," "rodeo," "chaps," and "lariat." It was a new world to the student preacher who had just arrived from Boston to preach the gospel. When the cowboys came to town shooting, loud talking, and lariat exhibitions and bronco busting were the order of the day and the terror by night. The first day the preacher arrived he saw two men shot in cold blood in front of one of the saloons. No one was arrested for it. No one thought much of it. It was a common, every-day occurrence.

Jim, the sheep herder, had come into this town off and on for thirty years. His habit was to herd sheep for some big outfit until he had earned a "wad." A "wad" was a couple hundred "bucks." When he had this much he could not stand sheep herding any longer. He felt an irresistible impulse to go to town. He would ride to town on horseback and tie his horse to his favorite hitching post and immediately bolt hotfooted for his favorite saloon. And that was the last of Jim for a day or two. It was also the last of his "wad." Some kind-hearted person in the community would take care of his horse. After a day or

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two of sobering up, and after he had borrowed some money from the saloon keeper to buy him a pair of overalls or a pair of shoes he would go back to the loneliness of sheep herding to earn some more money to take another spree.

This was the round of life that Jim lived. Yet everybody loved him. No one could just tell why Jim was loved. There was something about him that drew all kinds of people to him. There was something lovable about Jim. It was often so in the days of the saloon and of this kind of drunkards. Perhaps greatness and genius lurked within the personality of men like this. This greatness had never had a chance, but it manifested itself in a sort of incognito glow of greatness. Of course, Jim was a good sheep herder. He was dependable. He never lacked a job. Then he could tell the best Montana stories. He was the life of any party. He could sing to the heart of the West. Jim accepted the West. He accepted the vice of the West and the virtue of the West. He was the West. He was a very part of the landscape and of the foothills and of the prairie. Dupuyer was not quite Dupuyer without Jim. The West is not a geographical place so much as it is a state of mind. Jim personified that state of mind.

One day Jim died. It was his last spree. His giant body had stood it long. For thirty years he had come to Dupuyer. But now the life spark in Jim snapped. And it was a miserable death of delirium tremens in the back shed of a saloon on a bit of straw.

Jim had no known relatives. He came to the West when a young man. Mystery shrouded his past.

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Only once to his closest friend, while in a sheep wagon, did he lift the curtain on his life in the East. Something about a wealthy home, and college and disgrace. Then the call to the great outdoors, to the heroic West. But the curtain was closed forever. Nobody knew where Jim came from.

And nobody cared much. Nobody paid much attention to a man's family or to his past. The only question asked was, "What are you now?" Family connections, wealth, education, college degrees count for very little in the elemental and primitive life of the wild and woolly West.

Of course, Jim must be buried. Because of Jim's very high standing in the community, Jim must have a high-class funeral. A fund was raised among cattle-men, sheepmen, cowboys, and saloon keepers to bury penniless Jim in grand style.

The new preacher, who was the only minister forty miles in any direction, was asked to officiate at the funeral of Jim.

Two young men with a spirited team of horses and a springless farm wagon drove to the nearest railroad station many miles away with strict orders to "buy the best coffin they got." After the coffin was purchased these two trusted men tanked up with bad station whiskey. The road was frozen and very rough, and the team was anxious to get home. These drunken men drove so recklessly that the loose coffin rolled around and around in the wagon until the cloth on the coffin was worn to shreds when they arrived in Jim's town.

Big Bill, the saloon keeper, the general store

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merchant, and Scoop Flynn, the gambler, made up the funeral committee who had charge of all arrangements. The grocery man was the only person in the community who could "offer prayer." He had charge of all funerals until the new preacher came.

Of course, the coffin was in a terrible state for a man like Jim, but the committee decided after a heated conference to go ahead with the funeral on schedule time because sheepmen and friends of Jim had come from sixty miles around to the funeral. The town was full of people. Sheep wagons and Indian tents were pressed into service for sleeping quarters. Great barbecue parties were seen along the roadsides. A whole steer would be roasted at once on a steel rod over a great fire. The city smelled like it did at the thank-offering seasons of the Jews in the time of Amos.

There being no church in this old Montana cow town, the schoolhouse was pressed into service for this great funeral. The day set for the funeral dawned as clear as a bell. The atmosphere was so clear that the Rocky Mountain peaks pushing into the sky eleven thousand feet high thirty miles away looked like they were two blocks away. It seemed like you could reach out and touch the peaks with your hand. The canyon wind was starting. The weather men, who were sitting and whittling and spitting in the general store, told the preacher he had better put on his fur coat if he had one when he went out to the grave, for the wind they said would be forty miles an hour before night.

A three-hour holiday was declared. It was the

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first time in the history of the town that the saloons had been closed either night or day. Keys could not be found to lock the saloons' doors. Sentinels were placed at each saloon to keep people from going in.

The little schoolhouse was filled two hours before the service. Men stood ten deep outside of the building. The preacher looked into the faces of this strange crowd. They were the friends of Jim. This was the last of the great West. Never again could a crowd like this be duplicated. Never again was there ever a funeral so large and representative of the West in Montana. The West was going. The culture and the civilization of the East was pressing hard upon them. But this was the unspoiled West. Of course, the preacher did not understand these people. He could not possibly sympathize and love them like he learned to later. To him the crowd looked like wild birds caught in a building. The men were more at home in the saddle and at roping a steer than they were in the tight school seats. They were more at ease and more happy on the wide ranges than in a meeting house. The women looked artificial and sort of "stuck up" after having primped and aped the fashion plates of the big catalog houses. The preacher thought they looked better when he saw them natively and naturally dressed in the ranch houses.

Yes, he could see coarse and harsh lines on the faces. There were hatreds surging through their hearts as enemies from the ranges met face to face to bury Jim. But had the preacher known them better he would have seen big and noble hearts and generous souls who had been scarred by the hardships of the

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pioneer. These were the people who had dared the life of the West. These were the adventurers of a nation. These were the empire builders. These men had blazed the trails. They had laid the foundations of a new land and a new nation.

The young preacher had not held many funeral services. He had not many sermons ready. He had only one oration worthy of this great occasion. The year before he had engaged in an interstate oratorical contest. The subject used by all the students in this oratorical contest was "Alcoholism." The preacher did not win first place in the contest, but it did leave him with a first-class temperance talk. Being very anxious to rise to the occasion and make a great impression upon these western pioneers he chose the temperance oration for the funeral of Jim, who had died a drunken bum.

This sermon was his masterpiece. It bristled with stinging invectives against the saloon keeper and the saloon traffic in general. After speaking fervently about the awful ravages of alcoholism down through the ages of man, he turned suddenly to Jim in the coffin and to the saloon keepers in the audience and said: "Who killed Jim? Who put Jim in this coffin? Who made him a penniless wretch? Jim was a good man. No better man ever lived than Jim. Jim could not keep from being a drunkard. Jim had no control of himself. Who killed Jim? You saloon keepers killed Jim. You sold him the poison. You took his last cent. You made him a slave to alcoholism.

"Who killed Jim? We killed Jim. We of the United States. We licensed you to sell poison to Jim.



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We are responsible. The blood of Jim is upon our hands. May God forgive us for the death of Jim."

Then the preacher closed with a prayer to God for the soul of Jim.

An awkward silence followed the address when the organist could not find the music for the solo which was to have been sung by the school teacher from Ohio. A rustling of feet and noise was heard in the back of the schoolhouse where Big Bill, the saloon keeper, was sitting. He was trying to get out of the seat and at the same time he was trying to get the ear of the preacher.

Big Bill was the most feared man in the town. He himself feared neither God nor man. He was reputed to have killed four men. No one dared to arrest him. No one dared to witness against him. Big Bill had his own way in that town.

The young preacher had been very brave to dare to preach a temperance sermon at the funeral of a drunkard. But now he was not brave any more. He was turning white. His hands were trembling so that he could not hold the hymn book.

Big Bill was trying to talk. He was saying, "This here isn't right—this thing isn't right—it ain't right, so it ain't, to hold this here meetin' without taking a collection for the preacher."

Then without any further delay Big Bill went up and down the aisles passing his big sombrero cowboy hat around to the people inside of the room, and then to the people standing outside. Almost by brute physical strength and by threat he made some of the cowboys "dig up." Then he came forward and with



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a peculiar western stateliness and ado he poured out his big hat full of money and said, "There, sky pilot, there is your money for the greatest funeral sermon that has ever been spoke in these diggins." The collection was \$63.40.

Then Jim was taken out to the cemetery in the spring wagon. The black shreds of cloth hanging like weeping willows on the white box background of the coffin only served to emphasize what a complete failure Jim had made of his life.

The cemetery was just outside of town on an old abandoned Indian burial mound. It was a high, round typical happy hunting burying ground.

And the wind was blowing. By this time it was blowing thirty miles an hour. It was ten below zero. But nobody deserted Jim. Every man, woman, and child went out to the cemetery. The crowd completely covered the Indian mound.

When the men came to lower the coffin box into the grave it was found that the grave diggers had miscalculated and had dug the grave six inches too short. The grave was solidly frozen so the men had to go back to the town and find picks to lengthen the frozen grave. This took a lot of time, but no one forsook Jim, though they were chilled to the bone.

The crowd stood by until the grave was filled. This was the custom. Then men and women walked solemnly down to the old cow town. They said Jim was a good man.

And the saloons were opened to make more drunken Jims.

## CHAPTER IV

### "The Sky Pilot Up In the Air"

"How did you get here? I thought you made an address in New York last night. That's what the morning papers stated."

"Well, they told the truth, for once. I did. And how did I get here? I can answer by a word—air-plane."

"Indeed! How come?"

"That's easy when you know how." And he proceeded to tell about the trip, the sensations, and how it happened.

"It must have been about the most exciting time of your life, eh?" I said when he concluded.

"Well, no. Second, not first. There will never be another first." He stopped speaking and looked out of the window, dreamy-eyed.

"I didn't know you were in the war—at least, in danger, on the firing line."

"I wasn't—in the war; but as to the firing line—in danger—well maybe there was none, but that didn't appear until later." And he stopped abruptly.

We faced each other across the table in the dining car. The Pacific Flyer was carrying us swiftly westward over the prairie. We waited restlessly for the slow service of a crowded car, toying with the silver. I scented a story, a reminiscence—for already the gray appeared at his youthful temples.

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"Well, come on," I said at last, "out with it!"

He smiled indulgently, then said, "It might do for a chapter of your book."

Soon he was fairly launched in the story. He faced me across the table, talking eagerly, his eyes lighting up with reminiscent flashes as he spoke. Broad-shouldered, fair-haired, blue-eyed, he smiled at times, and then in the intensity of his telling he would frown and grip the table's edge. This is the story as well as I can recall it:

"I was a theological student in the East, with my eyes turned to the great West. 'Give me something hard in the newest country you can find,' had been my request. 'I want to build on my own foundations.' 'We have just the thing for you,' wrote a Western superintendent, 'a newly opened district where people are taking up homesteads by the hundreds. Only one church in the town. You can have your own way. A building has been erected by the townspeople, or rather by the commercial club. They are boosters and know that to attract the right kind of settlers there must be good schools and a church as well as good land and business opportunities.'

"After some delay I arrived in the 'boundless West.' The 'great open spaces' that had been but alluring words became realities. Miles—hundreds of them—rushed by the car windows, all a dead level of prairie. Then came the river valleys into which rails glided from the high plateaus; then, oh, glorious sight! mountains lifted along the horizon at sunset, as ended the young summer day. Dawn came early, but none too soon for me, the eager young traveler, faring

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westward, flying with swift wings of fancy into the land of my dreams. At midday we were again on the prairie, the white skyline of jagged mountain peaks fifty miles distant.

"Night came and I stepped off the train at the end of the rails. The friendly mountains now stood against the western horizon. It was not more than twenty miles to the foothills.

"After I got things going in town, the folks in the country began to ask me to come out and speak to them. I rode horseback at first and later picked up a team of cheap Indian pinto ponies—calico cayuses, some called them. We used to see them in the circuses back home; here they are numerous.

"Well, at one of the country appointments I preached at a schoolhouse. One Sunday afternoon I arrived a bit early and found the caretaker cleaning up. The school desks were fastened to strips and a whole row of them could be moved against the wall for seats, making a clear floor for dancing. 'This is the limit,' said the farmer as he picked up bottles and tobacco from the corners. 'Things is gittin' worse and worse. They was pretty decent for a while, but this last few weeks since the town got started, all the toughs come out and spoils our little neighborly meetin's. Some of our own boys was into it last night—fust time—but not the last, I'm afeared. And I got a nice little gal goin' with one of 'em—only fifteen, and if he ever comes to my place like he was last night, I'll—God forgive me, preacher, I don't know what I'm sayin'.'

"You can be sure that the nice little seminary

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sermon I had picked out with pretty phrases about the lilies of the field did not get released that day! No, not by a mile. Only a handful came, for the all-night revel kept a lot of them at home. But I opened up all my guns on the drink evil and the dance question and, when through, I announced that I would be out again in two weeks and give them the rest of the sermon, urging them to tell all their neighbors. After the meeting had been closed with song and prayer I heard a voice in the back of the room, loud and harsh.

"See here, young preacher! I don't allow to let no more of this stuff be spilled around heah. This is my place. I give this land to the deestrick and I got control. No more o' ye. Git out an' stay out.'

"I was pretty well worked up with my sermon and all, and this threat only added fuel to the fire of my anger, but I had sense enough left to say just a word. 'I will be here again, friends, in two weeks. Please let your neighbors know.' They looked at me, some of the women getting white and the men red. I walked out the door past the Old Timer, who scowled fiercely. He said as I turned to unhitch my ponies, 'Ef ye comes out heah next time, I'll shoot as shore as ye air born.'

"By the next Sunday the story had reached across the county. The town church was full. At the close of the service several men stopped me as if they were a committee appointed. 'Are you going out next Sunday to Big Prairie school?' asked one. 'Certainly,' I answered warmly, 'do you think I am a coward?' 'Now, brother, we admire your spunk,' said another,

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'but that old Wild Bill may do as he says.' 'Yes,' said another, 'he has two or three notches on his gun already, and we don't want him to add another—not on Sunday afternoon anyway,' he added with an attempt at a joke.

"'Gentlemen,' I said, putting on as brave a front as I could, 'that old wolf is a coward. If he had been a man he would have shaken his fist in my face, not tried to scare me with a gun threat. You bet I'll go, even if it's the last thing I do on this earth. Good morning, brethren, I have to eat and run. There's a little bunch of folks waiting for me twenty miles out on Boxelder Creek.'

"When I got outside, a little gray-haired woman stood near the door. She had heard the whole conversation. 'Brother,' said she, and her voice quavered a little, contrasting strangely with the words she spoke, 'go and fight for the Lord. He will deliver the enemy into your hands. Remember David and Goliath, my son.' I heard later that her only boy had been killed a year or so before in a bronco-busting contest. I could see where the lad had got his fighting blood. I answered her as humbly as I could in her old-fashioned scriptural language, 'The Lord is my sword and shield.'

"Well, the next Sunday came at last. It seemed months since I had been out instead of two weeks. Nearly every day someone had warned me not to take a chance. Some of the business men had assured me that the old fellow would not dare to carry out his threat, but that I was only making trouble for myself, that I could not make a new country as decent

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as the East. 'Better wait a few years and things will come round all right,' and so on.

"I preached in the country that morning and came back to town for dinner and then started out for Big Prairie schoolhouse. It was about ten miles. At three o'clock I approached the district, coming out of a wide, shallow valley to the higher bench land. As I topped the rise the whole region lay before me in plain sight. The schoolhouse was about two miles straight ahead on the road. It stood at the 'four corners,' as they designate the crossroads there. The two highways that met at the schoolhouse were well traveled for so new a country. To-day I saw an unusual sight. In each of the four directions, on every road, were to be seen rigs of all kinds, standing still, waiting. Wagons, buggies, men in the saddle, and an occasional automobile. They were not all there from mere curiosity. When I drove up a mile and overtook one of the men in an old-fashioned buckboard he stopped me with a word, then stepped out of his rig and, coming up to me, put into my hand the rifle he had been holding.

"Take this, Reverend. I didn't think you would have the nerve to call his bluff, but now I can't see a man shot down in cold blood like this. If he saw you had a gun he might not be so ready to shoot. Then, too, you might hit him first. He is getting old. Can't shoot like he could when he was younger. You hunt, don't you parson? Handle a gun?"

"That was pretty strong medicine for me, I can tell you. I had hoped the Old Timer was bluffing, but now I was near enough to see him pacing back and

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forth in front of the schoolhouse with his rifle over his shoulder like a sentinel. I was tempted to take the gun from the grizzled friend who had offered it to me, but I knew I could not do it. Even if I had been a good shot, it would not do for me, a minister of peace and good will, to begin my life work with blood on my hands. 'Thank you, my friend,' I said, 'you are kindness itself, but really I can't take it. I don't believe there is any danger. At least I hope not.' Already my skin was puckering with gooseflesh and the hair on my head was standing up under my hat. But I drove on slowly. There the sentinel paced in the nearing distance. In every direction I could see the rigs, slowly, as with hearselike movement, converging on the four corners. I drove right ahead and at last, after what seemed hours, reached the hitching post. I got out and tied the team with trembling fingers. Then, taking a long breath which I thought might be my last, I prayed to the God of battles to keep me from being a coward. I faced about quickly and looked up, expecting to see the gun at my breast—but neither man nor rifle was to be seen! The Old Timer—Old Bluffer from this time forward—I saw walking swiftly toward his barn near by and then out of sight. The people flocked into the meeting house from all sides, and the tensest service of my life was held. That community was transformed by the gospel of Christ. Christianity and decency won out.

"Well, that's all. But when it comes to taking an air journey with an experienced pilot—that's a pleasure trip in comparison to that Sunday drive out there on the prairie."



## CHAPTER V

# The Bishop In the Blizzard

IT WAS a big day for the little church. The bishop was coming. The church had never seen a bishop. This Western boom town was only two years old. The church had been built. Now it was to be dedicated by the bishop. So everybody looked forward to seeing the bishop whose reputation and fame for after-dinner speaking was great throughout the land.

It was in the dead of winter. The morning dawned beautiful and mild. It was ominously good weather. It was the calm before a storm. In the afternoon it was snowing. It grew colder. By evening a driving blizzard was on.

The first part of the dedication program was a banquet Saturday evening at eight o'clock. The bishop was to have arrived at seven o'clock by the train. With him were to come the president of the struggling western church college and "Brother Van," the unofficial bishop of Montana. But the train did not arrive. Eight o'clock, nine o'clock, and no train. Then the lost train was heard from. It was stalled in a drift ten miles out. All were safe and warm, it was reported, and the train would arrive soon.

The banquet was a formal affair. It was the social event of the winter. Three hundred plates had been sold at two dollars a plate. In spite of the blizzard

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every plate was taken except three. The people came to spend the evening and the night if necessary.

But the banquet could not go on without the bishop. So the people waited an hour. Then they sang for another hour. And it was ten o'clock. The cooks would not wait any longer, so the banquet was served.

Two real estate men and an undertaker were asked to "say a few remarks." And it was twelve o'clock. But the train was still snowbound. The blizzard was raging so no one dared leave the banquet hall. Every half hour reports from the train said, "All is well." One report said, "We have broken into the express goods and we have eaten the celery and the olives intended for the banquet."

Then the preacher took charge of the waiting three hundred. He told stories. He recited all the poems and readings he knew, and then gave a travel talk on his trip to Norway and Switzerland. And it was one o'clock in the morning. The train was reported only five miles out.

Then the preacher gave another impromptu address. He spoke of the glorious Northwest. He pictured how the teeming millions of the East and of Europe would build happy homes in this "Last of the West." He exploited the mineral and timber resources. He spoke of the superior fertility of the soil. "The Northwest will become the bread-basket of America," he said in a shouted climax. All the city boosters cheered him to the echo. And it was 2:10 A. M. Sunday.

As the cheering died down the shrill whistle of the train was faintly heard through the blizzard. The bishop arrived. His party was with him. Not a soul

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had left the banquet tables. From 2:30 to 3:30 in the morning the bishop gave one of the greatest addresses of his life. This banquet he said could not have been duplicated in all the wide world.

The bishop's geniality and eloquence won the banqueters instantly. No people detect real ability so quickly as the westerner. He has a disdain for frills and mere outward show. He cares little for titles and conferred distinctions. He will not go across the street to hear a man just because he is a bishop, but he will crawl on his hands and knees for a mile to hear a man who has something vital to say.

The bishop spoke with power and seemed like an inspired prophet at this early morning hour. He took for his text, "Go ye up and possess the west." The bishop told the simple story of the early settlement of Montana by various kinds of people, and how Montana had resisted civilization and cultivation up until the present. He told how this state had withstood all ordinary processes until now the last of the West was to be possessed by the finest and most heroic people of the earth.

"The first people to come to Montana were the explorers. The Lewis and Clarke Expedition in 1805 first revealed Montana to the world. But the explorer did not come to live in the state. He came only to look at our purple hills and glorious sunsets. He saw the rivers and the mountains and the lakes and the plains and the buffalo. He could not see the richness of the soil. He could not see the mountains of gold and the riches of copper and silver. The oil and the coal were hidden from him. The explorer did

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his part. He braved unknown perils. He told the story of the challenging open spaces of the great West.

"Then came the hunter and the trapper. He pushed his river boats up to the great waterfalls. Then he established fur trading with the Indians. The fur trader built the forts. He was afraid to venture out far from the fort. He left only passing and faint marks on Montana. He did blaze some trails. He did help us to understand the Indian. He filled in time.

"Next came the gold miner to Montana. Gold was first discovered in Montana about 1863. Henry Edgar and Bill Fairweather wearily dragged themselves through the gulch at Virginia City one late evening. They were discouraged. But they said to themselves, 'Let's make one more try.' They put their pick into the ground. In a few minutes they panned out twelve dollars' worth of gold. The next morning, in a short while, they panned one hundred and fifty dollars' worth of gold. They went back to Bannock, then the capital of Montana, for the purpose of getting supplies. They purposed not to tell any of the settlers where the gold could be found. Their faces looked so happy, though, that men knew that they had found gold. In spite of anything they could do, three hundred people followed them back to Virginia City. A little later in the Last Chance Gulch near Helena, great heaps of gold were discovered.

"With the miners came lawlessness and conditions that became intolerable. It was found to be easier to kill a man and take his gold away from him than it was to dig for the gold. Even the stage coaches were

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held up and robbed. The robbers and murderers were organized while the honest people were unorganized, and there was no government. No one dared to criticize anyone for murder, for it meant death. Even stage-coach drivers were in league with the robbers. No one could trust any man. One day a Mason died a natural death. It was the first natural death. At the Masonic funeral they got together to organize what they said was to be a Masonic Lodge. What they really did was to organize the Vigilantes. This was the first organization of honest men in Montana. Mr. W. F. Saunders became the first prosecutor. He was one of the great men of the early history of Montana. The Vigilantes started a campaign to hang all the criminals. In ten weeks they had hanged twenty-four thieves and murderers. When these Vigilantes had gotten a hold of the situation, two and one-half tons of gold was shipped from Helena to Fort Benton. This gold was valued at \$1,500,000, and it was safe.

"Then came the cattle-man. He was the connecting link between the frontiersman and the real settler. The cowman came into Montana from the South. He came from Texas or from Mexico. The southern cattle-men had gradually experimented by bringing their flocks farther and farther north. At last they found that the richest pasture land in the world was in Montana. With the cattle-man came the cowboy. The cowboy is the most interesting figure in American life. He is the most distinctly American of all our types. The fashion of his clothes never changed. He wore his shirt open at the neck. His vest was never

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buttoned and he wore a bright silk handkerchief. He very seldom wore a coat, but a very necessary part of his equipment were the chaps. His boots were high and tight. He wore his boots so tight he could not walk well. In fact, the cowboy was ashamed to walk. He would saddle his horse for two blocks of travel. He wore gloves and a very expensive high hat. This high hat served the purpose of protection from the sun in the summer and it served as an umbrella to him in the winter. A slicker which was tied on the back of his saddle made up the balance of his equipment. Then, of course, he had the lariat and the revolver.

"What a dare-devil was the cowboy of Montana! He courted danger. He was a quick and sure shot. His native and instinctive knowledge was astounding. He could navigate on the trackless plains without compass or chart.

"His strenuous life and the necessities of his kind developed a kind of sturdiness of character and loyalty to friends and reverence for women.

"Next to a weakling the cowboy despised a poor rider—'Oh, that fellow? He couldn't sit on a log without holding on to the bushes!' His real accomplishments were not many. Art, literature, and music were unknown to him. He took his amusement in gambling, drinking, riding, and shooting.

"The fact that the cattle-men came from the south can be studied in the many Spanish words used in Montana in our everyday language. The cowboy and the cattle-men ruled with a high hand on the

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plains of Montana for many years. But they did not make a high type of civilization. They did not possess the land for God. They brought only a very sparse population. Sometimes homes were fifteen miles apart. The pioneer missionary ministered to the cattle-men and the cowboys, but no great organized religious work was possible.

"Now the new day is upon us. The explorer, the trapper, the fur trader, the gold digger, and the cattle-man were only the John the Baptists crying in the wilderness. They prepared the way for high Christian civilization and the Montana empire. You have come to settle the land. You have come to irrigate the desert. You will build the roads and the bridges and the cities. Happy homes will dot these vast plains and a Rocky Mountain civilization will rise up in these foothills.

"I challenge you to possess these great lands of the West for God and righteousness. Here we must build a thousand churches. Colleges and hospitals must be organized and erected. This is the call of God and the will of the Master. Come ye out of the deeps. Come up to the mountain land. Come up where the air is clear and clean, where men can think and achieve."

So the Bishop spoke. The enthusiasm of this western crowd at four o'clock in the morning was boundless. There was something akin to the enthusiasm of religious crusaders in the western patriotism of these people. No one seemed ready to go after the banquet was over even. The common

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verdict was: "Yes, we are here to possess the West for God and humanity. The greatest opportunity of history is before us."

Now the blizzard has subsided. The cold stars were breaking through the clearing skies. The people plowed through the great drifts to their homes. The next day was a perfect Sabbath day and the church was dedicated free of debt. The money for the building had been raised in cash before the bishop came.



## CHAPTER VI

### When the Cowboys Came to Town

ONE of the last great cattle "outfits" to give over the range to the advancing tide of home seekers was the X > outfit with a wide well-watered range to the south and west of the Bear Paw Mountains. The ranch was well known and the cattle ranged over a country as large as the State of Delaware. The riders of this range were also noted for nerve, skill, and typical western dare-deviltry. This "outfit" was one of the last to disband, but in the fall of 1910 the homesteaders had made such inroads upon the range that the owners reluctantly gave the word to round-up everything that would pass for beef and get ready for the last big shipment of range cattle from that region.

The day for shipping was set and several trains of empty stock cars were shunted onto the long side-tracks near the loading pens. The point of shipment was the little town of Big Sandy. A town of one hundred people, but a town typical in every respect of the early life of those days. The only hotel was a wide rambling old wooden structure, two-thirds saloon and gambling rooms, and about one-third hostelry.

Word had gone out that the first group of round-up riders would be in town by a certain day. All was in readiness for their coming. All knew what it meant

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when the riders of the range after weeks of hard, lonely grueling work came to town. Extra bartenders had been put on, gamblers had drifted in from neighboring towns, and dance-hall girls had arrived to join in the hilarity of the night. It was something more than an ordinary round-up—it was a celebration of the passing of the frontier. How the cow-men of those days hated to give up the range, the old free open life of wide spaces, the glamour, the fascination of the round-up, the branding, broncho busting, and the rodeo. But with the spirit of those days cattle-men and riders met the issue with their boots on and without the pulling of leather. It might be the last round-up, but it would be a round-up long to be remembered.

Into such a scene and into the midst of such an occasion came a tenderfoot preacher. All unwitting of what was to transpire he had taken train from the home base of a far-reaching circuit to visit one of the outlying points seventy-five miles away. That point happened to be Big Sandy, and the date the very day set for shipping. He wondered a bit at the rather motley crowd which got off the train at the little station and filled the one bus to overflowing. But little time was given for conjecture. As soon as the passengers jammed into the vehicle, the whip cracked and away down the road the four-horse team tore to the town and hotel a mile away. It was not until nearly all the guests had lined up at the bar and taken a round of drinks that the rooms were assigned. The best that could be found for the preacher was a cot in the annex, where after saying his prayers

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quietly in bed, he dropped off to a fitful sleep. He arose rather late in the morning and went out to make a few calls on the inhabitants in the place who might be interested in the service planned for that evening. Rather cool receptions greeted him, for somehow the feeling seemed general that a "round-up" and religious gathering were not intended for the same day, and that the services of a preacher would hardly add to the festivities of the occasion. Discouraged and blue the tender-foot preacher was making his way across an adobe flat, when he saw something white on the ground at his feet. He stopped to pick it up, and saw that it was a motto postal card with these words in large letters, "MORE HOPE—LESS DOPE."

While the young preacher hardly dared consider it evidence that a kindly Providence was watching over him, he did consider it good advice and decided to use whatever hope might be left in him for the meeting.

About four o'clock in the afternoon he noticed inhabitants of the town gazing off toward the Bear Paws where low on the horizon a cloud of dust was visible. Now and then, like the distant roar of the sea, the bellowing and trampling of cattle could be heard. Slowly the great drove of cattle, urged on by cowboys, moved toward them. About a mile from town the cattle were bunched in a natural depression, and while two of the riders held them the rest prepared for a descent upon the town. About fifteen cowboys broke from the group and at a wave from the foreman were off on a mad race for town. Riding furiously, shooting their revolvers into the one street, pell mell

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they came. The Chinese cook who had ventured into the street to ascertain what the excitement was about, quite forgetful of oriental dignity, made a flying sprint for the safe retreat of his kitchen. With clanking of spur, laughter, and jest, into the barroom they poured, and a brave start was made toward slaking an alkali thirst of several weeks standing. From that moment on Big Sandy was a wide-open town, and the cowboys were in command.

To the tender-foot preacher any service that evening became a matter of tempting fate or trusting Providence. But the motto, "More hope—and less dope," had taken possession of him. Wills, the bartender, agreed to invite the cowboys over to the service. Barney, the innkeeper, promised to usher and take up the collection. Some one was found to play the little wheezy organ. Imagine the preacher's surprise when as the hour for service approached people of all descriptions began to drift in. Homesteaders, freighters, clerks, and teamsters came. Mrs. Maloney, who kept a little rooming house; Chris Jensen, the section boss; the waiters from the hotel appeared. Then several of the hangers on from the saloon, and finally, with noise and kidding, into the little meeting house and up to the front seat came a score or more of the range riders. One of the cowboys had confided to the preacher that if the real gospel was preached and the service not too long, he thought the boys would enjoy the meeting. The young preacher didn't know much of the western ways, but he saw that it was up to him to make the first move and keep moving. He had intended to speak from II. Isaiah,

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with a short introduction on the authorship of the book. Instead he decided it wiser to speak on "Fidelity." What faithfulness to duty, one's comrade, country, and God meant, with a simple illustration in closing of a mother's fidelity to the family and Christ's fidelity to humanity. In rather a shaky voice he announced the first song. Everybody tried to sing. With the effort—assurance and enthusiasm grew. What was lacking in harmony was made up in volume. The sermon was not long. Possibly the shifting of a revolver in a nearby holster hastened the conclusion. The collection was taken, several cowboys volunteering to assist. Needless to say, the offering was generous, the saloon keeper and a stalwart cowboy insisting as they passed down the aisles that everybody "dig up". The benediction, with a prayer that God's blessing might rest upon everyone, whatever the name, denomination, or creed, was uttered. Back to the cot in the annex went the wearied preacher, and late into the night and on till morning the noise of revelry, song, and dancing, the weird strains of the hurdy-gurdy sounded from the barroom. Was it worth while? What had been accomplished any way?

To the preacher it seemed as if all had been in vain, but the next morning, as he was leaving, the bartender gripped his hand and said, "I am sick of this game, I am going back to mother and the old town and begin a different life."

To-day the old town is gone. The old free life is no more. A new hotel, new buildings, many new homes mark the old town site. The cowboys have

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quite largely disappeared. A settled home life is in evidence, and to-day a nice little church stands near the spot where the little motto card, "More hope and less dope," was found by a discouraged tender-foot preacher.

## CHAPTER VII

# The Lady of the Bench

THEY called her the "Lady of the Bench." And she was a real lady. She was beautiful. She was educated and cultured. She was natural and unaffected. She was religious.

The Bench was a high and very level bench-like fifty-thousand-acre tract of Montana prairie land in the triangle section. The triangle was considered semi-arid by the cattle-men. It is as large as one-third of the state of Iowa. Bunch grass grew on this very fertile land, and it dried and cured standing on the ground. Great herds of buffalo fed on the Bench in the days before the white man came. Then thousands of cattle were fattened on the Bench. Now the big drive for settlement was on. Three great trans-continental railroad lines were bringing in hundreds of people from the East every week.

People of every occupation came. There were hotel people, bartenders, music teachers, violin makers, steam fitters, school teachers, and some farmers. They were all adventurers. A spirit of expectancy characterized all activity. These pioneers were trying to make an American farm community out of this Bench.

The farms were large, the houses were small and unpainted. Barbed wire gates stretched across the roads every mile. There was no need of building roads.

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The level prairie was road enough. The land was ready for the breaking plow. Vast acreages were sowed the very first year.

Almost before the homes were built a movement was on to organize a school district and to build a schoolhouse. Education has always ranked high in the minds of our pioneers. The very roughness of the surroundings seemed to call for the education of the children.

A young woman from Michigan had come out to the Northwest for the climate and for free land. She happened to settle on 320 acres of homestead land in the very heart of the Bench. This young lady came from a good home and had been trained in the best schools of America and of Europe. Her education was finished and she was about to realize the dreams of her girlhood when the dread disease attacked her. The doctors said, "Go West, sleep outdoors, get away from the damp, crowded East." So the little woman said farewell to her host of friends and bravely set out for the "Last of the West."

This young woman was employed as the first school-teacher in the new schoolhouse on the Bench. Her "shack" was only one-half mile from the schoolhouse. She was the only one in this new community who could teach school. So the community insisted on her taking it. She accepted with reluctance.

She tended her house and did the chores. She taught the school. She gave music lessons. She went to the community parties. She became the life of this new neighborhood. She was the salt of the earth and the light of the Bench.



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So they called her the "Lady of the Bench." No other name seemed to fit her. The rough western dances and drinking parties were transformed into the finest social gatherings. The talents of this cosmopolitan neighborhood, made up from people from the four corners of the earth, were marshalled and set to work by this teacher. The women were gathered into a strong woman's organization. Community service became a passion. A library was projected. A community hall was built. Men hauled the lumber free. The hall was built by a sort of barn-raising bee in one short day. The women furnished coffee and food, but the "Lady of the Bench" was the inspiration of it all. Big husky men were glad to heed her suggestions. She presided at the very heart of this new community. She ruled, not as a queen, but as the "Lady of the Bench."

Then one day a pioneer missionary preacher came into this community. He drove up to the schoolhouse, as his custom was when arriving in one of these new communities, and there he met the "Lady of the Bench." A meeting was called to be held in the hall that very evening. Through the pupils of her school every home on the Bench was notified of the meeting. The hall was filled with eager people. An enthusiastic service was held. Some said they had not heard a sermon in ten years. The people demanded that the preacher should come back again.

The Bench hall became one of the regular meeting places every two weeks. A church was organized. Hymn books and an organ were bought. The "Lady of the Bench" was elected superintendent of the

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Sunday school. A revival broke out, and half of the community joined the church.

This community on the Bench prospered greatly, in spite of ominous predictions of the old-timers that a drouth was sure to come. They said that when the drouth did come it might last for seven years.

Great crops of wheat and flax and oats and potatoes were grown. Big barns were built. Plans were made for better houses. Ford automobiles were just beginning to be seen on the roads. The cars were usually to be seen stuck in gumbo ruts of unpaved roads.

The "Lady of the Bench" continued to teach. One year, two years, three years. She never lacked hay in the loft for her cayuse horses. Her garden was always plowed promptly. There was always coal in her bin. Ole tended to that.

Ole was a big, tall, square-shouldered, fine-looking Norwegian farmer boy in the early twenties. He owned the ranch just south of the "Lady of the Bench." He saw her about her work every day and thought her the most wonderful woman he had ever seen. He simply worshiped her, but he was so awkward and bashful, especially when in her presence. He went to the socials, but his hands and feet were so large and always in the way. He was at home on the tractor and in the big fields. He was not at all timid when managing a crew of twenty hired men on his big ranch.

Prosperity seemed to smile on Ole. He bought section after section of land from discouraged people who had found that farming was not so easy after all.

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He had the very latest in farm implements. Wheat seemed to grow just a bit better for Ole. And he was lucky to sell his wheat when the market was high. He was a master farmer.

The "Lady of the Bench" also saw Ole at his work. She marveled at his strength and good nature. It wasn't long before the preacher thought he saw the love gleam in her eyes when she talked of Ole or glanced his way.

One cold and stormy night in January the preacher and his wife had an evening at home. It was Saturday night and the only night in the week when he did not speak somewhere. The fire was roaring in the coal blast heater and the lights were on full blaze, and the preacher and his wife were on their hands and knees examining the contents of a missionary barrel that had arrived that very day.

The doorbell rang and the preacher went to the door while the wife tried to chuck some of the many scattered articles back into the barrel. A big fur-coated man with white frost all over his face stood in the door. A car was throbbing outside. "I am Ole from the Bench," said the man. "I have come to get married to-night. Can you marry us?" After the preacher assured him that he would be glad to marry him, the big man went back to the car and brought in the rest of the party. His sister and her husband were with him, and after much unbundling it was discovered that the bride was none other than the "Lady of the Bench." Bashful Ole had won the fair lady at last.

As she stood there fresh from a long cold drive she

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looked iridescently beautiful. She was the very picture of restored health. The climate of the West seemed to have healed her perfectly. She was a beam of the fulness of happiness as she knelt at an improvised altar with her little hand completely lost in that of Ole's.

Then there were the congratulations and the blessings and some tears. Then they went out into the cold storm. They went out into a cold harsh world. Ours is a world that often crushes the tender flower of love.

Only once again did the preacher see this couple. It was after the service in the hall on the Bench that Ole had invited the minister to come and see his home and to have some supper. "You are welcome if you can stand such as we have," he said in his characteristic good-natured way. The preacher accepted the invitation and proceeded to the new home, which had been named the "Love Nest." This love nest had been built in a coulee. It was set like a gem in the heart of the wonderful purple hills of Montana. On the hills grew five hundred varieties of flowers, growing in squandering profusion. It was a paradise of beauty.

The home was a nest to be sure. The "Lady of the Bench" stood in the Western sunshine framed by the door of the house, and she looked like a gallery picture. The inside of the home was like the lady, neat and prim. The air of culture and subdued joy pervaded all things.

Ole took the minister out to see the farm. To the easterner it seemed like a vast domain. The farm

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stretched out miles in every direction. The farm implements covered an acre of ground in the great "outdoor sheds" of the West. Ole said he had two thousand acres of wheat and one thousand acres of flax as good as any that ever grew on the ground. He talked farming and new farm methods with enthusiasm and conviction. Then he confided to the pastor his plans for enlarging his holdings and becoming the largest farmer of the West. He said he planned to buy more land now when land was cheap. He would mortgage the land which he owned to buy more land. He said the bankers were urging him to use all the credit he had and to buy and to borrow and to borrow and to buy. As he stood there beside a gushing artesian well he looked the part of a world conqueror. He seemed to be within touching reach of his fondest dreams. Life looked good to Ole.

Supper was ready. Only the "Lady of the Bench" could cook like that. It was a happy meal. It was sacrament to the preacher's soul. Then he rushed away to his Sunday evening appointment.

Soon after this the missionary preacher was transferred to a city hundreds of miles away. Busy days and years intervened. Correspondence with the dearest friends seem to drag hard. Life is so busy. Then correspondence ceases altogether. The "Lady of the Bench" was almost forgotten. No, not forgotten, but crowded into the subconscious mind.

At last the days of the automobile tourists arrived. It became the fad and the fashion to live on wheels and to sleep in tourists' camps. Americans were becoming summer gypsies. Hundreds of thousands

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of people were trekking along the dusty highways of the West.

The preacher and his wife caught the tourist fever too. They must have a rest. So they worked for days equipping the car with tents, beds, and cooking utensils and proceeded to enjoy the hardships and the inconveniences of tourist life. But everybody was doing this, so it must be wonderful. So they were on their way one beautiful day to Glacier Park, the most glorious spot in God's out-of-doors.

After two days of driving the preacher was suddenly aware that he was on the Bench. It seemed so queer. Everything seemed so different, yet it was the Bench. Automobile speed makes all things different. Time and new associations make old places look strangely queer. Only the hills and yonder mountain ranges seemed the same. Yes, it was the Bench, but where was the "Lady of the Bench"? After some inquiry he found the old "Love Nest."

But the "Love Nest" was deserted. The windows were boarded up. The yard was a heap of junk with tall weeds. The barn had burned. The houses of the near neighbors were also deserted. There were miles and miles of deserted farm homes. What had happened? What strange calamity had come over this community? The same thing had happened to this community that had happened to a thousand other communities in the Northwest. It is the tragic and untold story of American pioneers. It represents the price paid for the colonization of America. In one form or another the same story has been told in the westernizing of America from the Alleghenies to the

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Pacific. America is built on the life blood of first settlers.

But where was the "Lady of the Bench"? Where was Ole? A house not deserted was at last found. The preacher heard the story. It was the same story he had heard again and again. Drouth one year, two years, three years, and then some more crop failures and drouth.

Ole worked hard and managed well. The first year of failure did not phase him. But he had borrowed heavily. Interest was piling up. During the second year of drouth he borrowed more to buy seed and hay and pay hired hands. The third year he thought surely the drouth was over. He borrowed from the family of his wife to sow another big crop. It failed again and again. Five years of it.

The strain of it. The worry of it. The sleepless nights. Blasted hopes. Ruined fortunes. The neighbor said the "Lady of the Bench" stood it bravely until the dread disease came back. Deprivation and lack of proper nourishment brought it back.

Ole fought like a giant caught in a trap, but to no avail. Too much land, too much money borrowed, too many expenses. He was bankrupted. He was defeated. He became morose. He gave up the struggle.

Then the "Lady of the Bench" died. The neighbors buried her in the little unkept country cemetery. The hot July sun beat down on the dry ground. Not a green blade of grass. Not a tree. Not a flower. It seemed cruel.

The discouraged neighbors tearfully said good-bye

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to one of the choicest souls that God ever took home. That group of neighbors, the Bench people at the funeral, represented the remnant of a great community. One-third of the former population they were. No one had endured more hardships. They looked like last year's bird nests. The ladies' hats had been turned and reshaped and relined year after year. Now the shapes had sort of settled down in hopelessness.

Many of the men had ceased to try to dress up. They came to the funeral in the field and barn clothes.

Reports in financial journals of bank failures and losses to investors tell only the surface of the story. They do not indicate the deeper tragedies in personal and family life. The heartache of it, the agony of it, the broken lives of it will never be fully told. Boys and girls were scheduled by ambitious parents for high school and college, but they will never go. Operations should have been performed, teeth should have been cared for, now it is too late. An old lady put it thus, "I am tired of bread and potatoes and meat. I long for some greens and some fruits. I have not had any for a year."

No one had a harder task than the minister of the gospel of God. He had to face a discouraged, despairing people every Sunday. What would he say? What gospel cheer could he bring?

It is terrible at fifty to lose everything and be in debt more than can be saved in half a life time. Property becomes a part of us. Our very souls seem tangled up with what we have. This seems particularly true with the rural people. Many utterly



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collapsed when it was first known that the mortgages would be foreclosed.

Others became cynical and soured on the whole world. Why should this be? Why should a good God permit such calamities? Others again took calamity with poise and serenity. Trials and hardships seemed only to turn them to God. Godless, faithless men turned to religion. It dawned on them for the first time that material things are only for the moment. Nothing in this world is sure or secure. They saw the need of deeper and more eternal investments. A more spiritual interpretation of life became a necessity to many stranded people.

It was a great day for the wide-awake spiritual leader. Forgotten portions of the Scriptures became again live and meaningful. The people felt a new relationship to the calamities of the Old Testament. Sacrifice ceased to be a mere theological phrase for preachers to juggle with. Sacrifice became the rich flavor of a new kind of soul. The religion of the cross became real and satisfying.

After the "Lady of the Bench" died Ole lost grip of himself completely. He walked home from the service in a stupor. He spoke to no one. He just wanted to go away. He left the horses tied in the barn. The cattle were in the pasture. The furniture was left in the house. He left it all. He wandered away. No one ever heard from Ole. And the bank took charge of the dried-up ranch.

## CHAPTER VIII

### The Bench Restored

THE homestead days of Montana were fitful, erratic, and unscientific. No careful study was made of rainfall. The quality of the soil was not analyzed. The people just tried to farm like they had done in the East. As a rule those who came out to take homesteads were not farmers of experience. Many of them were mere adventurers. They gambled for free land and they usually lost. But the day of the "riot of homesteading" was only a short fifteen years. Now the homestead period is over.

The day of the scientific dry-land farmer has arrived. High-grade people who have come to live permanently on the land have at last arrived. People have come to the Bench for the purpose of farming, not as it was done in Iowa, but as it must be done in Montana. Dry-land farming has become a science. The State agricultural school has carried out extensive experiments covering years of time. It has at last been conclusively proven that dry-land farming can be done practically and can be made to pay. Summer following, using the land every other year, conserving the moisture, rotation of crops, are some of the main points in the new plan of farming "dry land."

The population of the Bench is not as great as it

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once was for the ranches are so very large, but the people are prosperous and happy. The railroads now carry out train loads of the finest wheat in the world from the Bench. Diversified farming is gradually taking the place of the one-crop farm. Man has at last conquered even the so-called desert of the West.

The transition from homestead and land-booming conditions to that of dry farming was difficult economically. It brought on what has been called "The pain of the West." But the problem of organized religion was no easier. It must be said though, to the credit of the church, that the home missionary boards made it possible for the church to stand by and to serve the communities through the difficult days of drouth. The church stood by so long as there was one soul left.

But the problem of preaching the gospel adequately and the problem of religious education for children living on farms of a thousand acres is still an acute one. The last of the West, the new born West, the West that rose up out of tragedy and mismanagement and ignorance, this West must become Christian. The day demands a new missionary policy. Frontier conditions are over and frontier methods in church work are inadequate. The methods of the itinerant, exhorting, pioneer pastors will not win in this day of the radio and the automobile. A bolder program must be launched. There must be greater co-operation among the denominations. A vitally evangelistic and a modern social service program will save the new West.

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As yet the Bench people are served religiously only every other Sunday afternoon by a minister who comes in a car from a city thirty miles away. Only a handful of people come out to the little schoolhouse. The children are growing up in paganism.

## CHAPTER IX

# The Indian on the Buffalo Nickel

JOHN TWO-GUNS WHITE-CALF, the Indian, whose profile appears on the Buffalo Nickel coin, is a very interesting character and influential among his own people. He belongs to the Blackfeet tribe and lives near Browning, Montana, on the Blackfeet Reservation. He is not only interested in his own tribe, but frequently makes visits to Washington, D. C., and other places where Indians gather for social and business purposes. He is a believer in Indian ceremonies and works to preserve the Indian customs and traditions. He belongs to several Indian orders and is a leader in the Medicine Lodge and religious ceremonies. On all social occasions he takes the lead as a dancer and master of ceremonies. He is one of a few who dance in the Medicine Pipe rites.

John Two-Guns White-Calf's father, whose name was White-Calf, was a recognized chief and a leading commander in his tribe. He was born in the northern part of Montana and ruled the whole northern part of the state. He carried on war with several tribes in different parts of this country and Canada. His biggest war was fought with the Crovans in Canada, which resulted in three hundred deaths. When he was thirty years old he captured "two guns" from the Nez Perces tribe, which earned him the title of "Two Guns," which became a prefix to his name. When his son was one month old he honored him with the name

## THE LAST OF THE OLD WEST

"Two-Guns" also. Thus we have John Two-Guns White-Calf.

John Two-Guns White-Calf was born on the Blackfeet Reservation fifty-four years ago and has lived there ever since. He has never engaged in warfare. The Blackfeet tribe has had no wars since that time. About sixteen years ago, while he was in Glacier National Park, some government officials photographed him, and the following winter, to his surprise, while visiting the Capitol in Washington, he was presented with a new nickel coin bearing his likeness.

Two-Guns early in life was taught to worship the Great Spirit manifested by the Sun, which is the old religion of the Blackfeet Indians. The influence of the missionaries in the early days did not succeed in winning John to accept Christianity. And it was not until he was fifty years of age that the church succeeded in interesting him. It was after the church had demonstrated to him that it had an interest in his material and social welfare as well as spiritual that he gave his attention to it. On Easter Sunday, 1923, he was baptized and received into the church. He then made this public statement to the press, "On Easter Sunday I joined the Methodist Church and shall stand by it as long as I live." He frequently exhorts people to live strong clean lives and to be guided by the spirit. He thinks everybody should attend church every Sunday.

The Indian's way of thinking about religion is interesting. The following are statements made by John Two-Guns White-Calf: "When no white men

## THE INDIAN ON THE BUFFALO NICKEL

were in the land the Indian had his own belief. Each tribe had a different road to go, but all the tribes prayed to the Great Spirit, the Sun. We did not pray to the sun itself, but the Great Spirit back of the sun. Our tribal religions are like a rope partially unraveled, but each strand leads to the same great rope. When the white man came we found that he also prayed to the Great Spirit and called him the Great Father. Like the white man has different denominations, the Indian has different orders and customs in his religion."

"We call the earth 'Mother.' We pray for 'Mother'. Everything comes from the earth, so we call it 'Mother.' We prayed to 'Mother Earth' before the Christian missionaries came; after that we prayed to their God because they were more capable than we and believed they had the truth. We pray to the Medicine Pipe because we believe a good Indian, ages ago, went to heaven and came back to earth with it, which he received from 'Daylight.' When the missionaries came we found that they prayed to the same Great Spirit. That is why I like to see the people come together. We all should help each other. We pray to the same Spirit, but under different names. I always pray. When I go on a journey I pray for good luck and the Spirit helps me. We heartily believe in the Christian church and its teachings, and we want the people to be loyal to it. It is necessary in our times. We also believe that the old Indian's religious celebrations, the Medicine Lodge, are beneficial to our people for religious and social reasons."

## CHAPTER X

# The Old Prospector

JOHN WALL was a Philistine. His hand was against everyone and everyone's hand was against him. He had been reared in Cleveland, Ohio, but when a young man, lured by the gold fever, he had gone to Alder Gulch, Montana, when it was in its prime as a placer mining district. From its sands millions of dollars in gold were being dug and, although he was only one of thousands actively engaged in the pursuit of fortune, it seemed to him that his chances for wealth were literally golden. Then came disappointment. His claim was "jumped" and the man who took it was upheld by the influential men of the community. His wife whom he cherished and who was the one stabilizing influence in his life died, and he mourned her grievously. His one son went to the bad and soon was sentenced to a term at the state penitentiary. Perhaps it was not strange that he became soured on society and that he had no good word for anyone. Proud and independent, he asked no favors and in the early years of the century with the placer ground worked out and the once thriving community of Virginia City reduced to a small village, he had hard shrift to get along with a few jobs at day labor.

The pastor of the church was a young man just out of school and new to the West. The glamour of



## THE OLD PROSPECTOR

Mark Twain's "Roughing It" was over everything. Mountains, mines, minerals, people, and local history were all of absorbing interest. He visited the graves of the road agents on Cemetery Hill, saw the building in which five of them were hanged at one time, listened to the story of the futile ride of Mrs. Slade to save her husband from execution at the hands of a justly incensed community. In the course of his wanderings in the hills he came one morning to a cabin not far from town. It nestled on the side of a small gulch which was tributary to Alder. A stream of clear mountain water trickled from a spring beside it. A small plot was fenced off for a garden which apparently had not been worked for many years. The cabin was built of logs, chinked with mortar. The walls were not more than five feet high and the whole building was perhaps some ten by twelve feet in dimensions. He rapped on the door, and when it opened was face to face with John Wall. He recognized him, for he had seen him at the evening service and about town. In fact, he surmised before he knocked that this was his home. Tall, gaunt, with patched clothing, and thin and graying sandy hair, he was yet clean and gave a hearty welcome to enter his home. Inside the light was dim, even though it was bright outside. One small window was the only means for light or ventilation, except the open door. In one corner was the bed, a frame of ancient make, corded and without springs or mattress. Deer and bear skins formed its foundation, and over all were several faded and ancient covers. By its side was a pan full of ashes, showing the evidences of recent

## THE LAST OF THE OLD WEST

use as a spittoon. A well-wired chair, a small table holding a kerosene lamp and a candle, and a small cook stove comprised the rest of the furniture. By the side of the stove was a small pile of fuel. Sagebrush, greasewood, and fir. Evidently such as he could get near by. The walls were made of rough boards a foot wide and placed vertically around the room. They were undecorated except for a variety of small prints and articles placed in a haphazard manner upon them. An alarm clock, several straw hats, pictures from the papers and magazines, and a pair of antlers, which supported a number of rifles, all of ancient pattern. Among them was an old style needle-gun and Sharps carbine of the fashion which was in use just after the close of the Civil War. Over his bed hung the most prized possession of all. It was a crudely framed picture of his dead wife.

However, it was not the room which was interesting so much as its owner. Mr. Wall was dressed in coarse gray wool shirt and overalls. These last hung by one string and had been reinforced at seat and knees with pieces of the same material. No woman's gentle touch had fashioned these stitches. They had been "whanged" on with wrapping twine and a darning needle in stitches a half inch in length. Evidently the tailor had intended that his work should endure. Coarse shoes were on his feet. He seemed delighted and honored in having the preacher for his guest. He freely told his story and got out the old fiddle to show his proficiency in the old-time tunes. One could easily imagine how his instrument had been



#### THE OLD PROSPECTOR

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## THE OLD PROSPECTOR

company in the hours when he was alone in the little cabin on the bleak hillside.

Mr. Wall became a regular attendant at church and the pastor visited him often in his cabin. He found him sober, industrious, and a man of good mind who read good books, and who thought about what he read. In fact, one of his greatest privations had been the lack of opportunity to secure good literature. He was too poor to buy it and had no friends to loan it to him. One forenoon in May he was discovered at his toilet. The gold pan in which he had hoped to wash out a fortune from the golden sands of Montana was now relegated to the humbler role of bath tub. He had bathed and put on his Sunday best. He explained that this was the anniversary of his wife's death and that every year he made an especial effort to be with her. On this day he took what few flowers he could gather from the hillside and spent the hours beside her grave. What memories passed through his mind none of the town folk knew. The pastor had often wondered why he had kept on living in the midst of such hostile neighbors. Now he knew the magnet which had kept him in the face of disappointment and poverty.

Not many years after this the mountain country experienced a very hard winter. The snow fell deep and the cold spells were bitter and long. John Wall fell sick. Neighbors from the mine above him dropped in once a day to see how he was getting along. Old, sick, and alone, he had no money to hire a doctor. There was no one else to care for him. His

## THE LAST OF THE OLD WEST

friend, the pastor, had been moved to another appointment. One morning as these friends passed by they saw that there was no smoke coming from the chimney. They opened the door to find the room cold and John Wall lying dead in bed with the covers still warm. He died as he had lived his life, alone. Yet this was the usual fate of the prospector.

## CHAPTER XI

# The City of the West

THEY called it the City of the West. It was a beautiful city in the valley of a great river. It was on the crest of a boom. Real estate values had been rising and pyramiding. The city was new, freshly painted, with broad clean streets. The people stepped a bit faster than in the East. Business was on the hustle. The Chamber of Commerce had printed a multi-colored pamphlet describing the many charms of this city of the West. It was said to be the biggest little city in the world. The folders screamed at us. Modesty and exact scientific truth are not virtues of a booming western city. It is not so much untruth—it is merely a “slight exaggeration.” Little nine-story skyscrapers were teasing the horizons. Little Broadways flooded with squandering electric light gave a truly metropolitan atmosphere. There were broad parks and playgrounds and beautiful homes.

It was a city built on faith. It might be said of the business men that they were characterized by a mixture of faith in the future, daring adventure, and a spirit of gambling. They were doing big business on a small capital. It was said of many that they were doing business on a shoestring.

The little church had not kept pace with the magic growth of the city. In twenty years the church had not been enlarged and the program of the church had

## THE LAST OF THE OLD WEST

not been adjusted to the growing social need of this new city of the West. Indeed, there was no equipment for modern church work. The city buildings were bright, new, and interesting; but the church was dusty, dirty, and old.

One of the ministers of the plains had been called to this church. He had ridden the prairies; he had preached to the schoolhouse audiences; he had tried to evangelize the homesteaders. Now he was challenged by a greater task—that of calling a God-forgetting, rushing, self-conscious Western city to the worship of God.

The new minister made an ambitious beginning. He blasted the rocks of indifference and set out wide stakes for Kingdom projects to save the city. The people were beginning to respond. The empty pews of the evening service began to fill up. Religious optimism was in the air.

And then one day the old church burned down. An old worn-out furnace—and the hopes of the preacher and of the congregation went up in smoke.

There were hasty conferences. An offer to worship in the theatre was accepted. Denominational leaders came in to talk it over and try to help. Meantime great crowds began to pack the theatre from Sunday to Sunday.

The question of a new church building was an insistent and baffling one. The six hundred members were mostly poor working people and ruined homesteaders, and the city boom was going down in sympathy with the drought and the crisis in agriculture. These small manufacturing cities of the



## THE CITY OF THE WEST

West came tumbling down into a heap of ruined despair. Bank after bank was closed in hopeless bankruptcy. The church had five treasurers for the various departments and each one of them lost everything in successive bank failures.

Yet a church must be built. A little old burned-out auditorium would not do. The vision of the people had been lifted to a real church home providing facilities for the recreational and educational needs as well as that of worship.

A survey was taken of the membership of the church in a tentative way to determine how much could be raised for a new church plant. This survey estimated that only \$10,000 could be expected from the membership, but \$200,000 would be needed for an adequate plant. The conservative, banker-minded type of business men said that it could not be done and they counseled rebuilding of the old church, which was completely gutted by fire.

Then the preacher took counsel with God. He began to preach sermons on stewardship and our responsibility for wealth. He blazed away Sunday after Sunday. Soon family after family began to unite with the church in the theatre. During the winter season three hundred persons were added to the church. The whole community was awakened to the need of a church. A glorious Easter day dawned. New hopefulness came over this despairing and bankrupted community. The earnest, straightforward preaching of the gospel of God was giving men and women a new hope.

Then a city-wide movement was launched to build

## THE LAST OF THE OLD WEST

a church adequate to house the congregation that would soon have a membership of one thousand or more. The people gave sacrificially. They gave like they had never dreamed they could give. They gave on faith. They gave that which they did not have. The impossible was done and the church was built. Now a program of services is conducted in this church which touches the community in a wide and vital way. No more modern and spiritual promotion for the kingdom of God is done anywhere in America.

The last of the old West may perhaps best be studied in the new city of the West. Nowhere in America is there a better school system; the latest and the best in teaching methods prevail. Nowhere else do we find a finer park system. Nowhere do we find a church more ready to respond to the newest and best methods in saving a community for Jesus Christ.

## PART TWO

EMPIRE BUILDERS WHO PUT GOD INTO THE  
SETTING OF THE WEST

THE ACTS OF THE ILIFFS AND THE RIGGINS AND  
THE VAN ORSDELS

A LAST GLIMPSE INTO THE LAST OF THE WEST

THE NEW WEST AND IMPENDING PAGANISM

## CHAPTER XII

# Goliaths in Montana.

THE West produced spiritual Goliaths. Some of the most adventurous in the ministry heard the call to Montana. The last quarter of the nineteenth century in Montana witnessed church statesmanship and sacrificial abandon of self and overcoming of difficulties equal to that of Asbury's men in the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

To read a chapter in missionary heroics might be good tonic for the church to-day. That same pioneering passion would send us scouting into new strongholds of Satan. It would encourage us to put God into the center of our bewildered and disillusioned and cynical modern world.

In the advance guard of Kingdom enterprise, one of the first and most picturesque was Thomas Corwin Iliff. Dr. Iliff had all the fine characteristics of the true gospel scout. Decisive, energetic, bold, he was ever in a position of leadership. Men yielded to him leadership without question, for he was truly a man among men. In the long journey from Ohio with his bride in 1871 the last eight hundred miles was made by stage through a country threatened by Indian attack, with but little, if any, protection from the few and scattered forts. The Blackfeet Indians were angry at the encroachment of the white settlers. Up the Bitter Root the Nez Perces, driven out of the

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Oregon country, were in a hostile mood. The name Missoula is an Indian word signifying "Place of Fear." At the time Dr. Iliff came there were only about one hundred white settlers in the region.

Dr. Iliff realized the danger and in his decisive way at once set about to meet it. He organized a company, and having had training in the Civil War in military tactics, was made lieutenant. While drilling his company he was approached one evening by a striking figure in military uniform who said to him: "I am General Garfield of the United States Army. I am looking for a fighting parson by the name of Iliff." "My name is Iliff and I am a minister," was the parson's ready reply. General Garfield was in the West to inspect the forts and to ascertain the cause of the Indian unrest. When he left Missoula he said to Dr. Iliff, "I know the head of your missionary society in New York; and when I see him I shall tell him that I found his missionary in Montana drilling a company of soldiers." "Kindly tell him also, General," said Dr. Iliff, "that in order to save the souls of men I must first save their lives. You can say to him that every man in the company attends church regularly, and that they did not do it until I had disciplined them as soldiers." Of such heroic stuff was the early gospel scout made. Little wonder that Dr. Iliff was summoned a few years later to assume full charge of the Utah mission. From that work he was called to be assistant secretary of the Board of Home Missions. As secretary he visited every state and territory in the Union, traveling over three hundred thousand miles, and with fiery zeal

## GOLIATHS IN MONTANA

and earnestness, inspiring church work everywhere, especially emphasizing the great need of churches on the frontier. His loyalty to Montana never wavered and in 1911 he returned to Missoula, where in 1871 he had organized the first church, to dedicate the splendid new church edifice—a monument to a gospel scout's vision and faith.

## CHAPTER XIII

### Real Estate Prophets

WITH the danger of Indian outbreak largely overcome and the beginning of more settled conditions, the vision of home and church and school began to materialize. At the first what home life there was, was centered in the settler's adobe hut or the rude cabin of the prospector. The meeting house was some trading post, barroom, or mining shack. Most any sort of building was used for a school. It was indeed a far vision to see, "as the substance hoped for," church buildings, college halls, and hospitals. Yet with all the courage and assurance of faith, these Kingdom dreamers set about laying the foundations of such institutions.

Among the first of these early Kingdom builders in Montana was Francis Asbury Riggins. He came to Montana in 1873. As circuit rider and superintendent of missions he traversed much of Montana. On many an evangelistic journey, he rode long hard trails between the points where meetings were to be held. Riggins was inclined to be harsh in his preaching, speaking very pointedly of sin and of the punishment that awaited the impenitent sinner. W. W. Van Orsdel, on the other hand, who often accompanied him, preached the love and mercy of God. It was said that their preaching made an irresistible combination, for while one thundered the law from Sinai,



## REAL ESTATE PROPHETS

the other preached on the grace of Calvary. When Elder Riffin had finished what he had to say on the judgments of God, the audience was ready indeed to listen to Brother Van with his story of redeeming love.

In these journeyings Elder Riffin saw in vision many a populous city of the future rising before him, and so in Bozeman, Deer Lodge, Dillon, Great Falls, Lewiston, Havre, Malta, and many other places picked out choice corner lots, where in future years churches should be built. He it was who selected the site in Great Falls for the first deaconess hospital in the Northwest.

## CHAPTER XIV

### “The Best Loved Man in Montana”

As a messenger of peace and good will there stepped from the steamboat landing at Fort Benton in 1872 a young man who later was known as “the best beloved man in all Montana.” W. W. Van Orsdel, better known as “Brother Van,” had felt, from the time of his conversion in a Pennsylvania meeting house, an irresistible urge to journey to the far West as a missionary to the Indians. He had read of the visit of the four Indians to St. Louis in 1832 in search of the “White Man’s Book of Heaven,” and his heart responded to the call.

Brother Van Orsdel came from pioneer American stock. His grandfather, Isaac, born in Holland, settled in eastern Pennsylvania in 1776. His maternal grandfather was a soldier in the Revolution and rose to the rank of colonel in the Continental Army.

Born on a farm within gunshot of the Gettysburg battlefield, as a boy of fifteen, he wandered over that scene of carnage the day following the retreat of Lee’s broken legions across the Potomac, while his older brothers were serving the cause of the Union in a Pennsylvania regiment. That November he stood among the multitudes on Cemetery Ridge and listened to the immortal words of Abraham Lincoln as he read the Gettysburg speech in dedication of the National Cemetery.



W. W. VAN ORSDEL  
Came to Montana in 1872  
Died, 1919

T. C. ILIFF  
Came to Montana in 1871  
Died February 23, 1918

CLOSE FRIENDS



## "THE BEST LOVED MAN IN MONTANA"

There were several ways of reaching the western frontiers in those days. One was by the Overland Trail to Lander and Salt Lake City, with a cutoff from Lander to Bozeman. Another was the northern route, with the long weary miles across North Dakota and up the Milk River. Still another way was by boat from St. Louis, 1,955 miles, to Fort Benton on the Missouri River. Answering the Western call, the youthful missionary came to St. Louis and found a boat, "The Far West," ready to sail. But the fare was one hundred dollars and "Brother Van" had less than five. "What are you going to Montana for anyway?" asked the captain. "Oh, to sing and pray, to preach a little, and to help people to be good," replied the lad. "Well," said the captain, "I have been running this boat for a good many years, but you are the first person I have met going to Montana for any such purpose as that."

A few miles below Fort Benton, when the boat tied up for fuel, an Indian war party, led by Sitting Bull and Rain-in-the-Face, approached with the evident intention of boarding the boat. The captain, acquainted with Indian ways, persuaded them not to do so; and as soon as possible made away from the dangerous neighborhood. In later years "Brother Van" frequently told of the Indian reception committee that greeted his arrival in Montana.

Landing at Fort Benton, this early sky pilot found the town filled with freighters, trappers, gamblers, and cattle-men, and determined to hold a meeting; an adobe shack was found, and that afternoon "Brother Van" began his ministry to the West. Out

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from Fort Benton, to every corner of the state, this great heart, with gospel story and song, carried the message of his Master to all classes and conditions of men. Many of his meetings were held in saloons or dance halls. He was at home in the frontier post, the round-up camp, or the mining camp. With a voice of unusual sweetness and power he sang his way into the hearts of men. The Blackfeet Indians adopted him into their tribe and gave him the name "Amahk-Us-Ki-Tsi-Pahk-Pa," meaning "Great Heart." Because the Indians had been so mistreated by the whites, it was impossible for many years to do any missionary work among them, but "Brother Van" never forgot that early call and when opportunity offered, opened the Piegan Indian mission work.

One of "Brother Van's" favorite songs was "Diamonds in the Rough," and it ever fell with special power from his lips for his whole life illustrated the theme of the song. One rough miner who heard him sing said, "If you will sing that song to-morrow night, I will bring forty men to hear you." A gambler said, "I like that old scout; he plays fair." At Virginia City, Billy Blay, a notorious drunkard, seldom sober, who had left wife and family in the East to seek gold in Montana, and who had not even written to them for twelve years, was invited by Brother Van to the place of meeting. He heard the old, old story and, touched by the kindness of one who cared enough to seek him out, was gloriously saved. Near Helena a saloon keeper, the owner of a hurdy-gurdy, came to a meeting, was converted, and at once sold out his business and became a respectable

## "THE BEST LOVED MAN IN MONTANA"

citizen. Thus over all Montana, among hardened men, abandoned women, among the lonely and those burdened with sorrow, this kindly loving missionary of God went with his message of redeeming love.

The story of the song as given by Brother Van, which reached so many hearts, entitled, "Diamonds in the Rough," is as follows: Charley Byron was a celebrated clown in one of the biggest circuses on the road. He held a very lucrative contract, but hearing a gospel mission band on the streets of Fort Worth, Texas, he was converted. He at once gave up his position to follow Christ. The song which tells the story of his conversion is as follows:

"While walking out one evening  
Not knowing where to go,  
Just to pass the time away,  
Before we held our show,  
I heard the Gospel Mission Band  
Singing with all their might;  
I gave my heart to Jesus,  
And left the show that night.

### CHORUS

"The days will soon be over,  
And digging will be done.  
A few more gems to gather,  
So let us now press on.  
When Jesus comes to claim you  
And says you've done enough,  
The diamonds will be shining  
No longer in the rough.

## THE LAST OF THE OLD WEST

I used to dance the polka, the schottische, and  
the waltz;

I loved the theatre with all its glittering show  
and fuss.

When Jesus found me, He found me crude and  
rough.

But praise the Lord, He saved me, I'm a  
diamond in the rough."

I doubt whether even Peter Cartwright or Lorenzo Dow ever recorded a wider or richer experience as "circuit riders" in the pioneer days of Methodism than did Brother Van in his half-century of work in Montana. He lived to see his State change from a territorial wilderness largely inhabited by wild beasts and savages to a sovereign State with all the habiliments of modern civilization.

Brother Van never married. Up to the day of his death not many understood the reason. At the last Conference he was permitted to attend, which was held at Dillon, Montana, he confided the secret that he had kept for fifty years to the Rev. John Chirgwin, with the promise that no one should know about it until after his death. It was about 1880 when Brother Van was entertained in a home owned by a man by the name of Johnson, located near the present city of Dillon, Montana. It was the preaching point between the mining camps of Virginia City and Bannack. In this home lived a beautiful girl by the name of Jennie Johnson. A love affair developed here. The parents, who were prosperous, desired to educate their daughter and sent her to Northwestern



## "THE BEST LOVED MAN IN MONTANA"

University of Chicago, that she might fill her place acceptably in a Methodist parsonage, but it was not to be. Very early in her educational career she developed tuberculosis and, while everything that medical help could do was given to her, she died October 16, 1881. Brother Van, as a young man, attended the funeral as a mourner. All the rest of his life, whenever he visited that city, he never failed to visit the little cemetery and put a flower on her grave. At this last Conference, in August, 1919, in company with Mr. and Mrs. Boone, his host and hostess during the Conference, an elderly lady who in her girlhood days was a bosom friend of Jennie's, and the Rev. John Chirgwin, they wended their way to the little cemetery about three miles from the city. Brother Van carried in his hand a bouquet of flowers. He led the way to the cemetery, and upon arriving put the flowers upon the grave. The next moment, with uplifted hands, he offered one of the most beautiful prayers ever offered under the blue canopy of Heaven. He put his hand on the tombstone and lingered a few moments in silence as the tears trickled down his cheeks. Turning to Reverend Chirgwin, he said, "Now, John, keep this a secret as long as I live, but you may tell it after I'm in Heaven."

Not until 1909 was there an institution in the State of Montana for Protestant children where a home and education could be found for little ones from broken homes. In that year Brother Van interested a group of men in such an institution and opened what is known as the Montana Deaconess School in the beautiful valley near Helena. Possibly no other work

## THE LAST OF THE OLD WEST

initiated by Brother Van has had greater success than this institution. To the foresight of Brother Van this institution owes its existence. From the time when the building was opened by the governor of the State, until this hour, this institution has been moving forward. Over 1,300 boys and girls have received love and care from the deaconesses, and an education, fitting them for the duties of life. It was most fitting that a memorial should be built on the campus of this institution for Brother Van. The memorial is a building, costing \$125,000, which will provide a home and school for one hundred additional children. The deaconesses of the years past can never forget this wonderful man, moving through this building and taking the children in his arms, putting his hands upon them, and blessing them as the Master did of old. At his death he gave his entire life savings to the carrying on of Christian work in the Christian institutions of the State of Montana. His last message to the people of Montana was, "Tell them to hold on to God."

Early in his ministry Brother Van saw the opportunity and the need for establishing Christian hospitals in the virgin soil of Montana. The first one was opened in the city of Great Falls, largely through the instrumentality of the Rev. F. A. Rigg. A little while afterwards, when many thought that the institution would have to close, Brother Van became intensely interested and made a trip to Canada and secured the services of Miss Augusta E. Ariss for this institution. This was a Godsend to the deaconess work of Montana. Miss Ariss, who received her





## "THE BEST LOVED MAN IN MONTANA"

education and training under Mrs. Lucy Rider Meyer, in the Chicago Training School, was well fitted for this great task. The years have shown the wonderful foresight and wisdom displayed by Brother Van. There are now seven magnificent deaconess hospitals in the State of Montana, all of which have been mothered by the Great Falls Deaconess Hospital, through Miss Ariss. Brother Van always believed in a practical Christianity. It was a pleasure for him to care for the sick, visit the dying, comfort the unfortunate, and lend a helping hand to the young man or young woman desirous of obtaining an education.

In Brother Van's life we have a demonstration of the truth, that no life can be pure in its purpose and strong in its strife, and all life not be purer and stronger thereby. His body was laid to rest in the capital city of Montana, Helena. His resting place is marked by a huge boulder in the rough; the only marking on it is "Brother Van." At the foot of the grave a small stone is seen with engraving, "Rev. W. W. Van Orsdel, D.D., Pioneer Minister of Montana, 1872-1919."

## CHAPTER XV

### Close-Ups of Brother Van

WHEN Dr. W. W. Van Orsdel was introduced at the dedication of the State Capitol building, the master of ceremonies referred to him as "the best loved and most widely known minister in Montana." He was chosen to make the dedicatory prayer on that occasion. A fine oil painting of Brother Van graces the library building in the Capitol in the midst of the governors and other noted builders of Montana.

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It was commonly thought that Brother Van had an unusually retentive memory for names of people he met. But part of this I think grew out of a little innocent trick he had. He was an adept at discovering names as he needed them. I recall one occasion (there were many of them) when he was walking along the street in Helena with me and there approached an old gentleman who smiled a recognition as he approached.

"Who is that—what's his name—quick?" said Brother Van, *sotto voce*.

I replied, "Harry Jones"—we'll say.

"Well, well, Harry, old boy, how are you?" said Brother Van, shaking Brother Jones' hand most heartily.

"Why, Brother Van! What a memory you have. I haven't met you for about twelve years, and yet you recall my name easily."

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"Yes, my brother, there are many mysteries in Providence. How are all the folks, etc." Then the conversation would go on with Brother Van utilizing very adroitly all the bits of information he could draw from the brother about his family and the circumstances of their former meeting.

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Brother Van took great pride in never disappointing a congregation. His record was most remarkable considering the distances and difficulties in reaching appointments in this big field. Up to within a few years of his death he had never failed one audience—was indeed rarely late.

We had a morning appointment, recalls Dr. C. L. Bovard, a church dedication at Dutton, and an evening service at Choteau, some twenty miles to the west cross-country. With ordinary roads and suitable transportation, this would be considered an easy and safe schedule. But as usual in dedications, the service lengthened out much beyond the ordinary preaching hour. The money raising, altar service (Brother Van never omitted that), and a luncheon at the church—all took time. It was the middle of the afternoon when we got started. My remembrance is that the man who was to have taken us failed, and to our utter amazement a man drove up to the church in a heavy two-seated spring wagon, to which were attached two rather light horses.

It was early spring, and the sun had thawed the surface of the roads just enough to make them heavy, especially when we were about half way across the plains and had several miles of gumbo. The

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ponies soon slowed down to a slow walk and finally had to be rested often. Our patient driver had to admit that he could not reach Choteau that night, that his horses were played out. He said he would try to find a ranch nearby where he could feed and rest over the night. As we had our suit cases, rather heavily packed, we did not know just what course to take. We knew it would be out of the question to hope to find a house among these settlers that would accommodate the three of us.

While we rested the poor sweating animals, I looked at Brother Van in a way that signified that I had given it up—that we could not hope to reach our appointment that night. I was on the eve of giving out this opinion when on the horizon to the westward appeared a speck, and which in a short time proved to be an automobile—a Ford, I think. As this was the only moving vehicle we had seen during our journey we took a little heart. But, alas, at a cross trail some half mile to the west of us, he turned southward. And then I gave voice to my thoughts and said we would better get busy and see if we could find shelter for the night.

But Brother Van declared that he had made this appointment in good faith and that he believed yet that the Lord intended to get us to it. Just then the driver startled us by exclaiming: "Look yonder! That fellow is turning around." And sure enough, he was returning down the long slope toward the main trail. But still the question arose in our minds, "Was he headed back for Choteau, or would he come our way?" When he came to the crossroads there



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was a few moments' hesitation. Then he turned toward us and made his way slowly through the muddy lane, soon reaching us.

"That's the man," said Brother Van with suppressed emotion.

"Do you know him?" I asked, surprised at his positive claim of recognition.

"Never saw him before in my life, but that's the man who is to take us to our appointment." And by this time Brother Van had his suit case out of the wagon, and walked confidently over and introduced himself and explained about the preaching appointment at Choteau. The man turned about and we sped along without accident, reaching the church in Choteau while the pastor was announcing the first hymn.

This incident has always impressed me as similar to many we find recorded of the ancient prophets.

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Brother Van's loyalty to his church and belief in her greatness were unfailing. On one occasion this fealty came nearly leading him into some embarrassment. It was at a district meeting where one of our younger bishops was in attendance.

The hour was being devoted to a discussion of our young people's work. After much extolling of our then fairly new Epworth League organization, at that time not everywhere adopted by our churches, a visiting minister from another denomination arose and asked the privilege of saying a few words about the Christian Endeavor movement. The chairman, of course, courteously granted his request. But as

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the brother waxed eloquent with his praises of his organization, one could sense an attitude of restlessness in the chairman's behavior. In closing the speaker quoted with much gusto the statistics of the Christian Endeavor world organization, the totals reaching then, as I remember them, between two and three million members. Being confident that at that time our youthful organization would suffer in comparison, he dramatically turned to Brother Van and asked: "Brother Van, how does this compare with your Epworth League membership?" Without hesitation and with every faculty for vision in Methodism's future greatness in full play, he replied: "Oh, brother, taking in the whole world, I should say we probably *have between five and six millions.*" Reading in the faces of his brethren a degree of surprise, he asked for confirmation. Some ready brother helped him out a little by suggesting that if we haven't them now "it won't be very long until we do have them." The young bishop looked very serious, but said nothing. He told Brother Van after the meeting closed that he was fearful lest he should appeal to him for a confirmation. The upholder of the Christian Endeavor's greatness, somewhat crestfallen, muttered as he took his seat: "Well, that's goin' some!"

This incident annoyed Brother Van for some time. We all comforted him by telling him that, in view of the fact that the bragging tone of the brother's challenge was so obviously out of place and so highly exasperating, we wondered how he held himself down to such low figures!

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Brother Van had certain sayings and phrases that we all recall, and it seems that these characterized the man to a considerable extent. One of these was, "Under God," which was always uttered by him in the utmost reverence of tone and manner. It signified complete submission to his will and the recognition of the help that alone could come from him.

Then there was another which was quite expressive of his abounding optimism. He would sometimes use it to the confusion of some brother who was inclined to magnify his difficulties—or who was inclined to be squeamish under the raw conditions that we used to find in our frontier life. The saying was, "Oh, brother, never mind a little thing like that."

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Another expression that was common to Brother Van was, "Why, that is as clear as a bell to me," sometimes varied to, "clear as sunbeam," etc. And here again we get some insight into a remarkable characteristic of Brother Van: he was largely governed by his intuitions. He was not a great reader of books. Indeed, I do not remember ever finding him deeply pondering any book—not even the Bible. Oh, yes, he read his Bible regularly and lovingly. But I do not recall him enthusing over any book. This doubtless led his oldtime friend, George Logan, to speak of Brother Van's "well-selected, but unused library."

But if there ever was a man who depended upon the direct vision of the way of duty that man was Brother Van. This was true not simply in matters of soul import, but in every way. When he said he had

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a thing "as clear as a bell," he meant that he had sought and found light upon the problem from an unerring source. Then he wasted no time in doubting what should be done. He had seen the thing with a clarity that produced a profound faith and conviction on all the affairs of his day. For Brother Van's interest was not fixed simply upon what men are accustomed to call "religious" things; he was deeply concerned in all the affairs of both church and state.

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The Wild West movies seem to many doubtless very much overdrawn. But I can vouch for an incident in Brother Van's life that would seem to justify the most extravagant of these movies. I learned first hand the narrow escape Brother Van had when he first came to Montana of being hanged for a horse thief. We were dedicating a church at Radersburg, Montana, only a few years ago. We spent two or three days visiting among the old-timers before the Sunday of dedication. And, although nearly forty years had elapsed, there were a number who well remembered the incident of Brother Van's first visit to this mining gulch.

The story those old folks tell runs about as follows: Brother Van had but recently come to the Territory, and as yet had no horse, and so walked from one settlement to another. Having heard of Radersburg as a stirring mining camp, he set out afoot to visit it, walking from Bozeman with only one night's lay-over. Of course, when he reached Radersburg he was pretty dusty, and with his cowboy hat and clothes he looked like most anything else than a preacher.

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As he entered the little town he excited a good deal of attention. This he naturally expected. But it was not long until he saw signs of something more than curiosity: the men were gathering in groups and regarding him with anything but friendly eyes. As he passed the post office he was attracted to a poster beside the entrance: "\$100 Reward," etc., for a horse thief who had been operating in an adjoining county. Brother Van did not stop long enough to see if the description tallied with himself. (Judging by the actions of the people, he decided that it did.) He hastened toward an open space and mounted a cast-off spring wagon and started singing the good old Methodist hymn, "O, Happy Day," etc. This he followed with an earnest prayer, and then told the people who he was and why he had come among them.

The old lady who told this story to me was nearly ninety years of age. Brother Van sat by, clearing his throat as was his habit, apparently much embarrassed. I asked the sister if she believed he was the horse thief.

"Why, to be sure," she said half apologetically. "But as soon as he began to sing I knew we were mistaken."

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Mr. Wyllis Hedges, now of Hedges, Montana, owned the original townsite of Great Falls. There was at that time no indication of the thriving city which now covers the broad acres of what then was his ranch home. One day it was reported that the Indians were on the warpath. The family at once went in hiding among the sagebrush on the hills, but

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close enough to the road to keep their eyes on the ranch buildings. No one appeared all day long until late in the evening. Then as it drew dusk a lone traveler was seen on horseback approaching the ranch. As he rode he shouted lustily. The noise disturbed them, for it might be an Indian singing the war song. One of the boys was sent down to the fence to reconnoitre. Soon he rose to his feet, swung his hat, and shouted, "Come on, come on, it's all right; it's Brother Van and he is singing Rock of Ages." Brother Van was a friend of the Indians. He went in and out among them without fear or hindrance for they knew that he was their friend.

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It was Fourth of July and the little town of Augusta, which nestled among the foothills of the Rockies, had planned a great celebration to which the people from a radius of over a hundred miles had been invited. There would be a rock-drilling contest for the miners. Single-handed and double-handed they would drive holes in a great block of granite while the judges stood with stopwatch in hand to see which team drilled the deepest hole in the allotted time. For the cowboys were various contests and races. Roping and bull dogging, running races, and saddle and go races—all the events with which the East in the last few years has been made familiar through the names of the professional rodeo.

To a ranch home a few miles from Augusta came on this fourth day of July the Methodist circuit rider, Brother Van. He was welcome in every home. Welcome for his message, but doubly welcome because

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he brought the news and for his winning personality. Hospitality was the first virtue of the pioneer, but Brother Van would be welcome anywhere. His kindly nature, his genial smile endeared him to all who knew him, and he was as welcome and as much at ease in the home of the rich and influential as in that of the less important citizens of the state. It was forenoon when he arrived. His horse was stabled and he was asked to stay for dinner. After the meal Brother Van retired to the living room for a good visit with the members of the family. It is safe to say that he was as great an attraction as the celebration in Augusta some miles away. He was noted for his voice and, of course, it wasn't long until the strains of "Over and Over," "Die No More," and others of the oldtime songs could be heard. Time passed rapidly.

Meanwhile the cowboys were more interested in the rodeo in Augusta. Brother Van was like all Methodist preachers since the days of Asbury, a good judge of horseflesh and he never rode anything but a good one. The cowboys eyed his mare, saw possibilities in it, and took it with them to Augusta. Just before chore time, as the meeting in the living room was breaking up, they returned to the ranch in triumph, bringing back the preacher's horse and with it a five-gallon keg of beer which it had won for them in the races. To them it was a good joke on the preacher, and the fact that he could laugh with them at his own expense is a partial explanation of his popularity.

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Stella Brummit, in her book on Brother Van, tells a story of what happened in an evangelistic trip taken by Brother Van and Dr. Iliff.

After the meetings at Virginia City, the two evangelists had an itinerary planned ahead. One appointment was at Madison River schoolhouse. By the mail to Virginia City had come a precious package from the East for Dr. Iliff's wife. This little woman had come to the West gladly with her earnest young husband, but the people at home had distressing thoughts about the frontier hardships that she had to endure. There were hardships certainly, but of these she never complained. Now, here was a package from home!

When the evangelists got into the buggy, which was to carry them to the schoolhouse, the precious bundle was carefully stowed away. They traveled to Madison River, which they had to cross, and found it in flood with the melted snow from the mountains. The old bridge had been washed away. So the young men sat on the edge of the ruins and talked things over.

"Shall we give up the trip?" asked Dr. Iliff.

"No, we can't do that. The people are expecting us," said Brother Van.

"Well, let's try to cross," replied his chum.

In they plunged, driving the horses toward the nearest point on the opposite bank. When they were about one third of the distance across the river the buggy began to float and the horses began to swim.

"Van, can you swim?"

"Not a lick!"



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"Well, you get up on the seat, take that package and keep it dry," shouted Dr. Iliff as he jumped out.

He unfastened the horses and they swam to an island in the stream. Then he began to guide the floating buggy toward the bank. In the meantime Brother Van sat still, holding the bundle aloft that it might not be soaked. When they reached the edge of the flood in safety he deposited the bundle on the seat and climbed out into the water to help push the buggy up the steep bank. Valiantly they pushed. The buggy went up slowly and then slid back. Again they boosted and again the slippery banks failed to hold the load.

"Van, you aren't pushing!"

"Well, I'm played out. Now let us try once more. Now all together!"

They gave a mighty push and the buggy went over. But, alas! the bundle had slipped out into the water, and as they looked, it was being rapidly carried downstream. Iliff, who was standing on the high bank, called out, "Van, you'd better get that package. It belongs to my wife."

In the dismay of the moment, Brother Van forgot that he didn't know how to swim. Out he struck. With mighty splashes and flounderings, he overtook the package and brought it to shore. Then those two preachers stood and looked at each other, wet to the skin, hatless and disheveled, hands torn and bleeding, sermons no longer dry, and the package seemingly ruined. In a moment they burst into boyish laughter, and all was well. While they consulted as to the next move, a ranchman came along and took them

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home with him. From a promiscuous jumble of clothing the preachers were outfitted. When they were dressed and came into the light of the room and beheld each other, they laughed again like truant schoolboys. They were comical figures enough in the makeshift garments of that frontier home. They went to church in those clothes and began a revival which meant a great deal to the life of that community.

The bundle? Oh, that was a fine black silk dress. When the preachers returned to the ranchman's home, they found their own clothes dry and in condition for wearing. The beautiful, lustrous silk found in the package was hung in rich folds about the room to dry. The water in Madison River was crystal clear and did not injure the silk, which was of good grade.

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The Rev. George Logan tells a story of Brother Van as district superintendent, which illustrates the spirit of comradeship that he shares with all men, even the saloon men and gamblers. On one Sunday morning Mr. Logan asked for a good collection to make up the district superintendent's salary, saying, "If I don't get it this morning, I'll come again to-night." The collection was not big enough, and true to his word the second collection was asked for. One man put a stack of six silver dollars on the plate, and so the amount received was sufficient to make up the sum required for the unpaid salary.

Going down town next day Mr. Logan met the man of the silver dollars, who with a grin asked, "Did you raise Brother Van's money last night?"

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"I did," was the pastor's reply.

"Did you notice that stack of silver dollars on the plate?"

"I did," said Mr. Logan again.

"Well, I'll tell you a story if you'll promise not to get angry about it."

"I promise," said the preacher.

"Two men at the service on Sunday morning remembered afterward that Brother Van's salary was short, and they agreed to play for the money in the afternoon. If A. won, the money was to be Brother Van's; if B. did, Brother Van lost. Word went around and the saloon filled with sports to watch the game. If A. won, the crowd yelled, 'The Lord gets that!' and if B. was lucky, 'That goes to the devil!'"

A. had won, and the unsuspecting district superintendent's salary was paid by the successful gambler. Mr. Logan looked the narrator in the eye and said, "I'm so glad I got the money; it has been in the hands of the devil long enough. Brother Van will put it to a better use."

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Another early time incident was narrated to Rev. Edward Smith by Thomas Hamilton, whose cattle and one cowboy were killed by the Indians. Mr. Hamilton was a settler on Upper Horse Prairie Valley, who also acquired vast holdings and later built a fine modern residence on the early homestead site. Mr. Hamilton was the true type of the generous-hearted westerner. He was a great friend of Brother Van to the day of his death. In Brother Van's work settlements were far apart. He often made the trip

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on horseback from Virginia City, Montana, to Salmon City, Idaho. Mr. Hamilton's cabin home was midway between these two points and made a fine stopping place for travelers. Mr. Hamilton explained this situation and then went on and told the following story:

"I had just come in with my team at noon. While giving hay to the horses a couple on horseback on the highway called over to know if they could feed their horses and get dinner. I said, 'Put in your horses and let them bust themselves on this fine hay, but you will have to see Mike about dinner (Mike was the nickname for his wife, the travelers thinking it meant a man cook took chances and put up their horses)."

"They came into the house and 'Mike' soon had a fine dinner ready. But neither Mike nor I could make out who they were. When it came time for them to go one of the two asked: 'How much do we owe you?' 'Well,' said I, 'Two kinds of fellows go through here wearing 'biled' shirts, they are gamblers and preachers. I don't know which you are. If you are gamblers I am going to take it out in money, if you are preachers I am going to take it out in prayer. There is the old Bible on the stand and it's up to you fellows.' Brother Van arose to the situation. He said, 'My friend Riggin over there is a preacher. He will read a chapter from the Bible.' It was done. Then Brother Van sang and prayed."

"Now," continued Mr. Hamilton, "When I die I have already ordered that they send for Brother Van. He is at least one man whom I believe will say something good about me."

## CHAPTER XVI

### A Banker Preacher

DR. JACOB MILLS was born in Topsham, Vermont, November 18, 1842. He was at the time of his death nearing his eighty-third birthday. He was of a long line of New England ancestry. At the age of nineteen he enlisted in the volunteer infantry of his country and served until wounded at Winchester, where he lost his left arm. At the close of the war he returned to his native town and devoted himself to business until, at the age of forty, he felt the call to enter the ministry. He had been married previously (November 17, 1870) to Miss Jennie Mills. After some irregular supply preaching he cast in his lot with the struggling missionaries in the big State of Montana, where he gave unstintedly of his time and money for the remainder of his life.

Dr. Edward Laird Mills, his son, writes of his father as follows:

"He was the first resident pastor in Fort Benton and covered Sun River, Sand Coulee, and High Wood, making the trips horseback or in a two-wheeled cart. Great Falls began to develop before he left for White Sulphur Springs. The move from Great Falls to White Sulphur was a little over two hundred miles and was made with a four-horse team conveying the household goods. It took us from Monday morning till Saturday night. I did the driving, being ten years

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old; father having only one arm, manipulated the brake and the whip.

"When he first took the Bozeman District in 1887, that included all of North Montana, though Great Falls, Benton, and Lewistown were about the only places of note in it. That year, however, the Great Northern built to Havre and the towns of Glasgow, Chinook, and Malta were put on the map. As a presiding elder he secured the first lots for our church in Glasgow. The trip from Bozeman involved about 450 miles each way. He only kept this one year, his report to the Conference stating that the development of the territory was coming along so rapidly that the Great Falls District should be constituted. Brother Van and Riffin were put up there in charge of the new district and in another year or two it became the North Montana Mission."

The phrase "Empire Builder" is usually applied to those magnates of materialism who deal in ore, timber, or transportation. In particular it was associated with the late James J. Hill, who had the good fortune to add rare imagination to keen business judgment. But those who lay the material foundation for human development must ever remain subordinate to the real builders, who are concerned with "living stones" and whose objective is "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." The 1,200 United States soldiers whose bodies lie buried on the Custer battlefield did something for civilization in the Northwest. They broke the back of savagery, surveyed some roads, built a few bridges, described the fauna, flora, and climate of the new country, and

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prepared the way for the prospectors, cowboys, sheepherders, and farmers who were to come later. The sixty-five Methodist preachers whose remains repose in the Lee Mission Cemetery at Salem, Oregon, dealt with subtler issues and did a vaster work. Through them there came the school, the press, the library, the hospital, the church, the home—all institutions which are fundamental in or accessory to Christian civilization. What Theodore Roosevelt and E. Lawrence Godkin said in praise of the circuit rider is profoundly true. Pre-eminently he was the apostle of the Permanent. It was a happy thought to put him in bronze on the State House grounds at Salem, and in a sightly position at the nation's capitol.

Edward L. Mills says that the strong types of men who came to the frontier can be illustrated in character and individuality of the three pioneers, F. A. Riffin, W. W. Van Orsdel, and Jacob Mills. Each was so different from the other.

Riffin was college bred, well read, intellectually keen, and a notable figure in general Conference. He was an invincible optimist, alert in securing real estate and starting new institutions, a friend to all young preachers, and the church owes much to him. It was his misfortune that the virtues which he best exemplified were not those most appreciated in the primitive stage of frontier development to which he came. Hence he was compelled to sacrifice his dearest habits and predilections upon the altar of home missionary necessity.

Van Orsdel was of another type entirely. Of Pennsylvania Dutch extraction, he possessed a nature

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overflowing with good fellowship—the friend of everybody. The writer drove into a strange town on a Saturday afternoon thirty years ago. He was met by “Brother Van” on the outskirts. As we went into town, we soon met a prominent saloon keeper and deputy sheriff. There were cordial greetings, handshaking, and “Brother Edward, meet Brother Sullivan!” It was ever thus. With little education and not much taste for preaching, “Brother Van” was a superb singer and exhorter, and “put the church on the map” in dozens of frontier hamlets.

Dr. Jacob Mills was different still. A Scotch-Irishman raised in New England, he combined ancestral spiritual fervor with the acute business instincts developed by his hard environment. With him economy and industry were major virtues. His father had done some preaching locally for the Advent Christian Church. A decade ago, in Salt Lake City, Dr. Mills met the late Judge George F. Goodwin, a prominent layman of our First Church there. They proved to be fellow-Vermonters from the same section of the State. The judge got out his father’s diary and, in glancing through it, discovered under date of November 1, 1857, an entry to the effect that his father had then officiated at the ordination of Jacob Mills, Sr., at Groton, Vermont, and that four hundred people witnessed the ceremony. Sixty years later, in the “Zion” of a religion born out of the visionary mysticism of one Vermonter and given lasting significance by the organizing genius of another, the two sons greatly relished the recital of this episode.



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Converted and called to preach in mature life, Dr. Mills carried over into church affairs the zeal for system ingrained by former training. He abhorred shiftlessness of every sort and his twelve years of administration as presiding elder still registers in the business conscience instilled into official boards. "Pay your preacher up, meet all benevolences in full, take the church paper"—this may not have been pleasant gospel, but it was much needed and he preached it uncompromisingly and persistently. Those were the days of small things. Dr. Mills' first year on the Bozeman District brought him a salary of \$1,310 (without any allowance for rent or traveling expense), and he was at home only fifty-one days during the year. His judgment of human nature was usually good and the ministry was enriched by some competent young men who entered it under his supervision. John A. Martin and Corliss P. Hargraves may be mentioned as examples.

Few preachers have the nerve for or skill in personal evangelism that was exhibited by Dr. Mills throughout his ministerial life. In the early days he came one night to the hotel at Sun River and found it full. The proprietor said, "There is another man named Mills assigned to Number 10. He is out just now. If you care to share his room, you may do so." Dr. Mills took the chance and retired. Pretty soon the other guest returned and acquaintance was begun. Presently the conversation turned to religion. The young man proved to be a hard-shell Baptist, who had backslidden a good deal more than that brand of theology is supposed to permit. He soon was

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awakened spiritually, reclaimed, and lived a consistent Christian life thereafter.

Ministers on the frontier are under continuous and often overwhelming temptation to go into secular business. Legion are the ex-preachers in the Northwest who are selling real estate or life insurance or operating small farms. On a certain district, some years ago, the number of such, plus those preaching in non-Methodist pulpits, was one more than the quota of effective preachers at work within the same area. One must not throw bricks indiscriminately at these brethren. Some of them did the right thing in quitting the ministry. For instance we knew a man in Utah who was a college graduate with a wife and five children, and who was starving on an \$800 salary. He became superintendent of schools in the same town at a salary of \$2,000, and did more for the church than ever before. What light is shed on this acute problem by Dr. Mills' admittedly potent example?

Very little. He never left the ministry to engage in secular pursuits. His business investments in Montana antedated his entering the ministry by two years. The location of those investments probably was a factor—not wholly conscious—in the selection of Montana as a field for christian service.

The principle of stewardship was always fundamental in his christian thinking. When "Layman" was only a voice crying in the wilderness, Dr. Mills devoured his literature and circulated it widely. Some of our finest and most liberal laymen received their awakening in this matter from his sermons and

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quarterly conference exhortations. For him the tithe was a minimum and not the maximum. As a trained accountant he kept books for the Lord. A study of these books was a revelation. The detail was meticulous, the accuracy all but absolute. There were 655 entries embracing contributions to a great number of men, and a wide variety of good "cause." The total amounted to \$170,000 or an average of almost \$4,000 a year throughout the period of his residence in Montana. Forty per cent went to Montana Wesleyan College, now Intermountain Union College, fifteen per cent to deaconess institutions, and the rest elsewhere. In 1913 the earnings of the estate were \$12,958, the contributions to benevolence \$14,670. Gifts were never made carelessly, but as a result of careful study and in such a way as to stimulate giving on the part of others. Thus example reinforced precept, and the far-flung enterprises of Montana Methodism were given a solid undergirding. When the creeping paralysis of agricultural deflation finally wiped out his holdings early in 1924, his chief regret was that he could not carry out his plans for Intermountain Union College.

## CHAPTER XVII

# Kingdom Builders

WHILE the gospel scout blazed the trails, the missionary sowed the gospel seed of truth and righteousness, and the Kingdom prospectors chose locations and surveyed foundations, it remained for that great army of Christian ministers and laymen following in their train to quarry the rock, mix the mortar, and rear the walls of the city of God. Such men also were heroes of faith. With scanty means, with limited membership, with sublime courage and enthusiasm, they set about the task of building. Space does not permit the naming of these early builders. What a list it is—Job Little, who swam his horses across the Missouri to reach an appointment, and who is called upon to baptize the great-grandchildren of early pioneers. George D. King, also living and rejoicing in opportunities to tell the story of what the gospel did in early days. A. W. Hammer, the cowboy preacher, who, converted on the round-up, turned to the more glorious task of rounding-up souls for Christ. Of Dad Logan, who turned from teaching in a frontier school to become an instructor in righteousness. Of John A. Martin, converted as a brakeman on the Great Northern Railroad, who gave himself to handling the gospel train. And then there are the Smith Brothers, the Haynes Brothers, John Hoskings,

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Wilder Nutting, Bovard, Adams, Calvert, and Crouch. What a list it is, and how worthy are these men of a place in the "Order of Caleb."

No less worthy are those loyal laymen who through hard years and trying times have stood by the Kingdom building, furnished the means, kept the work a-going, supported the Sunday school, encouraged the Epworth League, maintained the Ladies' Aid, and have done everything within their power to advance the cause of Christ and to hold the fort for God. To a discouraged preacher, ready to give up and go back East where the work was easier and more pleasant, Brother Van Orsdel once said with telling emphasis, "Anyone can quit, it takes a real man to stay in Montana." So that young preacher stayed and others have stayed and, though the work has been hard and conditions not always pleasant, this building for God out on the frontiers of life has been abundantly worth while.

Like all sacrificial work for the Master, some day there will be the reaping, and the words of Dr. Spencer's great song made famous throughout Montana by Brother Van:

"Over and over; yes, deeper and deeper

My heart is pierced through with life's sorrow  
and cry.

But the tears of the sower, and the songs of the reaper  
Shall mingle together in joy bye and bye.

## THE LAST OF THE OLD WEST

"The Seeds I have scattered, in spring time with weeping,  
And watered with tears and with dews from on high;  
Another may reap what in spring time I planted,  
And gather my grain in the sweet bye and bye."

## THE ORDER OF CALEB

There is a sense of close knit brotherhood among pioneer ministers scarcely found anywhere else in the wide, wide world. Some one has remarked that a conference of ministers is a cross between the labor union and the lodge. It is that, but it is more. It is a brotherhood forged together in the battles for the Lord. It is an acquaintanceship and friendship tested by every element of competition, rivalry, jealousy, and ambition known to man, yet a friendship which emerges out of that purified, purged, and sanctified. This side of heaven there is nothing quite to match the meeting of veteran ministers at the Annual Conference.

The Order of Caleb was organized in the Montana Conference of pioneer home missionaries who had served in the State twenty years or more. The order was instituted by Bishop Naphtali Luccock at Fort Benton, August 16, 1912. The occasion was the fortieth anniversary of the arrival of W. W. Van Orsdel in Montana. The pastor at Fort Benton, Charles M. Donaldson, arranged a banquet for this occasion. The guests of honor were: W. W. Van Orsdel, F. A. Riggins, Jacob Mills, J. H. Little, R. M. Craven, George Logan, and J. A. Martin.

## KINGDOM BUILDERS

At the close of the dinner speeches Bishop Luccock, with a few appropriate remarks, instituted the Order of Caleb and presented each pioneer with a badge, which was a watch charm with a legend—"Order of Caleb, Numbers, 13:30"—engraved on one side and the cross on the other side.

The slogan of the Calebs is that of Numbers 13: 30, "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are able to overcome it."

At the close of the banquet the following organization was effected:

Caleb (President), F. A. RIGGIN;  
Joshua (Vice-President), W. W. VAN ORSDEL;  
Joseph (Secretary), J. H. LITTLE;  
Naphtali (Treasurer), BISHOP LUCCOCK (Honorary).

The order stands as an incentive to younger men to go and do likewise. The order meets once a year at a banquet at the Annual Conference.

The following is a list of the members of this organization in 1927. Those who are starred are deceased:

\*W. W. VAN ORSDEL  
\*F. A. RIGGIN  
\*JACOB MILLS  
J. H. LITTLE  
\*R. M. CRAVEN  
\*GEORGE LOGAN  
J. A. MARTIN  
\*J. W. BENNET  
G. D. KING  
JOHN HOSKING  
S. J. OLIVER  
\*J. W. TAIT  
P. W. HAYNES  
\*H. A. JAMES  
C. C. CUNINGHAM

WILDER NUTTING  
EDWARD SMITH  
CHARLES D. CROUCH  
A. W. HAMMAR  
A. C. SNOW  
\*J. M. EASTLAND  
C. E. HAYNES  
T. H. BARKER  
A. D. WELCH  
J. CHIRGWIN  
J. A. MEEKE  
R. P. SMITH  
O. A. WHITE  
C. L. BOVARD  
E. L. MILLS

## CHAPTER XVIII

# Better Than Gold

THE spirit of adventure has attracted to its ranks and leadership men of keen intellect, strong physique, and great spiritual fervor. When the church loses her appeal to such men she will cease to conquer.

The pioneer preachers were men of vision and prophecy. They could visualize great fields of golden grain on what was then a barren plain. They could see countless farms owned by prosperous farmers on what was then a parched desert. They could hear the prattle of happy children where only the prairie dogs dwelt. They could see great cities and centers of civilization and industry where the savage Indian pitched his tepee.

On the mountain side where the lonely prospectors labored, buoyed up with the hope of great reward, they could see the great mining industry of the West building cities with heterogeneous populations of thousands of human souls.

The dashing mountain streams brought to them visions and dreams of an age of great power and prosperity, and some of them have lived long enough to see their dreams come true.

The pioneer preacher of the West was not bound or limited by any sectarian spirit. He saw the men he ministered to as sinners, and some of them were indeed great sinners. He saw Jesus as a great Saviour



## BETTER THAN GOLD

and he was consumed with a burning passion to see men saved from their sins. His was a simple gospel and he believed in immediate results. It can be truly said of him, "The love of Christ constraineth him."

In those early days there were few written agreements. If a man proved dishonest or dishonorable, according to the standards of that particular locality, the six-shooter was plainly in evidence and the way of the transgressor was hard.

The pioneer preacher ministered to such men, preaching in saloons and gambling houses, and oft-times settling disputes.

We hear a lot these days about good roads. Those were the days of no roads. The pioneers were called trail-blazers. The pioneer preacher on foot or on horseback either followed old trails or was compelled to make new ones through the forests and thick brush, continually facing physical danger in the dense forest or on the mountain steep, his pony stumbling along beating time to the mournful notes of the howling coyote, or the stentorian tones of the mountain lion.

Many humorous stories could be told of young preachers coming from the East with tall hats and silk umbrellas. Some of them beat a hurried retreat, while others happily adjusted themselves to the new conditions and became mighty leaders of the church of Christ in the West.

One young preacher came out to the West from the city of Philadelphia a great many years ago. He brought with him a rubberized raincoat and an umbrella. This young preacher was given an appointment many miles away from the nearest railroad

## THE LAST OF THE OLD WEST

point. This lad was a real tenderfoot, having been reared in the city. It was absolutely necessary that he learn to ride horseback, so a farmer with whom he boarded decided to have some fun. On a cloudy morning that threatened rain he, with two others, decided to teach the young preacher to ride. They told him to put on his raincoat and also to carry his umbrella. They helped him into the saddle, which they had already "cinched" on a half-broken "Cayuse." It was the funniest happening in that little farming community for years when that preacher attempted to ride that wild horse dressed in that rustling rubber raincoat; the lines in one hand and the umbrella in the other. That cayuse gave a wild snort or two and proceeded to assist the preacher to dismount, to the great enjoyment of the little group of cowboys looking on. Needless to say, the preacher dismounted with considerable rapidity. He arose, however, with a determined look on his face, took off his raincoat, picked up his umbrella and set it aside, buttoned up his coat, climbed into the saddle, and rode that horse until he conquered him. This incident may appear somewhat boyish, but the fact remains that if he had not conquered that horse, he would have been defeated at the very beginning. He would have lost the respect of those men and would have failed as a western preacher.

The story is told of a young couple who in the early history of Montana took up the work of the ministry. A crude little shack was built of rough lumber and used as a parsonage. It was located at the head of a circuit more than a hundred miles in length. They

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had a sweet little baby. When the father was out on the circuit the little one was stricken with diphtheria. There was no doctor near and no way to get to one, and during the father's absence the baby died. The father arrived shortly after the child's death. Then the heartbroken parents dug the grave, made a little crude casket of rough lumber, and there out on the prairie, alone and sorrow-stricken, they laid their little darling to rest.

One of the most difficult problems that confronted the early pioneer preacher was an economic one. He was compelled at times to deny himself and his family the very necessities of life.

Notwithstanding those trying financial conditions those loyal men and women stayed at their posts, bearing aloft the light of the gospel to the very outposts of western civilization. Like the great apostle, they were troubled on every side, yet not distressed; they were perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; they considered that their light affliction, which was but for a moment, worked for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Men in secular or commercial work often have difficulty in understanding why the home-missionary worker stands by and endures the hardships. Why does he deny himself and his family the ordinary comforts of life? Why does he forego the many opportunities in the West for investment and participation in the growing values of a new country?

The only answer to these questions is that there are some things better than gold. There are values that

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commerce cannot estimate. There are compensations not to be computed on adding machines. There are salaries never paid this side of Heaven.

The real compensations of the ambassadors of God are in human life. To help a young lad to open his life to God and to become a citizen of the kingdom of God and of the nation is better than gold. To help a dying soul to face the valley of the shadow of death in complete trust and confidence is worth more than a big salary. So to preach the gospel of Christ and so to live it before men that an entire community is turned to think in higher values, is better than gold.

So no one expects to pay the pioneer preacher fully in wages. It cannot be done. On the other hand, there is a respectable measure of gratitude that the church ought to express in gold. There is a decency and a fitness of things that ought not to be overlooked. The man who burned out his life in enthusiasm for God and the community ought not to depend on charity in the latter days of his life. The church has a definite and indisputable responsibility to men who have been worn out in the ministry.

Most of the larger denominations of the church are now beginning to recognize this. Pension systems are being evolved so that the old ministers need not be dependent on charity. The Methodist Episcopal Church may be taken as an example of what the other churches are doing.

The General Conference of 1924 authorized the Board of Pensions and Relief to take such measures as in its judgment were necessary to build up and administer a connectional permanent fund which was

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thereby established and to increase the revenues for the benefit of conference claimants. They were also authorized to establish a permanent fund for the relief of aged and disabled supply pastors who had served as pastors for fifteen years or more, ten years of which should have been consecutive, giving their entire time to the work of the church. Their widows will be entitled to help. This fund is to be distributed on the basis of necessity.

These worthy pioneers of Methodism now in the retired relation and many others who because of advancing years will soon be compelled to lay down the working tools of their profession, are certainly entitled to the very best the church has to give. It is surely the duty of the church to help in every way to make them comfortable and happy in the eventide of life. They have fought a good fight; they have kept the faith.

## CHAPTER XIX

### Frontier Education

EARLY in the history of Montana the pioneer leaders seemed to appreciate the need and the value of higher education. There was a broad vision and a deep interest in the young people. This interest resulted in the organization of the Montana Collegiate Institute, at Deer Lodge in 1878. This was the first institution of higher learning in the Territory of Montana. Soon the sentiment developed that this higher training should be under Christian direction, and that the school should be under the guidance of a religious denomination. Negotiations were opened which resulted in this school being taken over by the Presbyterian Church in 1833, and incorporated under the name of the "College of Montana."

In like manner the daring faith of the religious pioneers of Montana is shown in the bold plans to establish a Methodist Christian college when the entire membership of the church was but a few hundred. Action which started in 1877 resulted in the location of Montana Wesleyan College at Helena in 1889.

The College of Montana struggled along with a small enrollment and limited means, occasionally meeting to plan for a permanent closing of the school entirely, frequently meeting to determine how to pay the salaries of its teachers and meet incidental

## FRONTIER EDUCATION

bills. The struggle went on and on, each difficulty seeming to add another burden, until finally, in 1913, the school closed its doors.

Montana Wesleyan had a very similar experience, and at times possibly more serious, for the supporters were limited in numbers and finance, and often were obliged to make great sacrifices for the support of the school. At one time President C. W. Tenney took over the school and conducted it as a private venture. At another time all the preachers consented to give eight per cent of their cash salaries. The amount thus raised was to go to the support of the institution. This and other sacrifices saved the school to a continuous existence.

The story of these two colleges is the story of the pioneer preachers in the early days on the Western frontier. It sounds like an impossible romance from some fairy tale to hear some of the older generation tell of the things done by these frontier circuit riders. They not only administered to the sick and buried the dead, but they preached in the saloons, hunted Indians, and rode the range. While these frontier preachers did all this and other things "too numerous to mention," yet they left their stamp indelibly on the pages of history. They left the Christian college and the Christian church.

All honor be to the Sky Pilots of Truth. They built the huts where now stand cities; they dug roots from the earth where now the harvester gathers the grain; their rafts marked the pathway for the commerce of nations; they saw the first struggles of business; they stood by the cradle of the Christian

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religion—indeed, they are the chosen sons of earth, the children of Israel, going forward into the Promised Land.

These messengers of God looked into the future and laid broad and deep the foundation of religion based on service. Their program, to be comprehensive and constructive, must be educational, so schools and colleges were in their first planning.

The College of Montana and the Montana Wesleyan were outgrowths of these truth-bearers in the early days. The leaders of the Methodist and Presbyterian groups considered the needs seriously and prayerfully, and it was finally decided to unite their money and their influence to save the church college for Montana and youth.

This was done, and in 1923 Intermountain Union College was the result. This institution was located on the Montana Wesleyan grounds in Helena, and is managed by a board of thirteen trustees—four elected by the Annual Methodist Conference, four by the Synod of Montana, and five by the eight selected from the two groups. This is perhaps the first union college organized and supported by these two great denominations in the United States. In this way there was saved to the State the only protestant college in Montana with a full college course.

Intermountain Union College to-day gathers up the finest and best manhood and womanhood from all denominations. The state institutions of learning are inspired to a higher idealism. The place of this college in the life of the new West will be large. The struggles of the pioneer past should give humility.



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The new equipment and larger endowments should challenge to ever larger service. A new day has come to the Union Christian College.

To maintain the idealism of Christianity in higher education in the West has not been an easy struggle. On the other hand, to keep the balance of culture and education with spirituality has taken determination. The story of the struggle of the denominational colleges on the frontier lines of America and the fine product of cultured and Christian men and women that we find all over the West, certainly gives us one of the finest chapters in the heroics of the West. The church was saved from undue emotionalism by the college, and the college was saved from barren intellectualism by its dependence on the church.

## CHAPTER XX

# The Winning of the West

THE frontier has vanished. The old order has passed out forever. The "wild and woolly" West is only a memory. The millions of bison have been succeeded by the cattle on the many hills. The old-time gold prospector is no more. The old stagecoach with "leaders and wheelers" composing the spectacular driver's four-horse team, and the old swaying Concord coach has been displaced by hundreds of miles of electrified transcontinental railroad. Orderly society with the church, the public school, and the college have displaced the old order.

Now large enterprises are developing. Enormous power plants are being constructed at our water falls. The pressure for capital has become enormous and opportunities for greater development are everywhere. The demand upon the new and permanent settlers for everything in the building of a new community is so great that it has left little or no money for the development or equipment of the church. This will explain the imperative need of further home-missionary money for the churches in the West. The need is far beyond the strength of the local people. Capital has been in such urgent demand for temporal activities that it has crippled benevolent interest such as churches, schools, and hospitals. It would be indeed

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difficult to find anywhere richer opportunities for the investment of benevolent funds than in Montana.

The new West has found itself. Montana with its enormous resources in timber, minerals, irrigated farming, and the new dry farming is destined to be a large factor in the production of wealth. A steady increase in population is a certainty.

What shall the program of the church be from now on? Shall it still cling to pioneer methods? Shall we still compete and multiply churches in small cities? The guidance of the home missionary boards is needed now as much as in the pioneer days. Something more than mere money is needed now. Church statesmanship is needed. We need a creative Christian leadership. We need more young men who have the fire and the readiness for the sacrifice of the Van Orsdel's, and who at the same time have the intellect and the culture of our universities.

One of God's choice men of Montana, who has been one of the later pioneers and who has given several decades of his life to the church in Montana, and who saw the last of the West pass out, sat in his home in the mountains one evening. He took a mountain-top outlook upon the past and the present and the future and he said, "When I study the work that we have done in the past I am afraid we lacked genius for adapting our work to the new conditions that pertained in the frontier. I am aware that much might be said on the converse of this proposition—that there has been too much adaptation to local conditions. And I am not advocating that we should let down on the essentials of the apostolic message

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or that the program should be set aside or diluted. I am thinking particularly about methods and organizations. I do think that a little more holy daring in adapting our program to conditions as they are here, instead of copying after the work in the East, would have brought greater results.

"Then if our program had been directed more specifically toward the work of training and indoctrinating our children in the Sunday school and Epworth Leagues, we should have had a generation better able to stand the awful strain to which our day is subjected. Not one in ten of us early preachers felt a clear responsibility for religious education.

"Then I feel that we have fallen short in the—training of pastoral leadership. I am not blaming anyone. I am only endeavoring to state facts. We should have established a better equipment for the training of men for the West.

"Looking into the future it seems to me that we have some clear-cut needs that ought to be stated. There should be more consecutive plans and more permanent ecclesiastical leadership. Our bishops have never remained with us beyond a single quadrennium. In a new and rapidly developing country like this we need men who will set their plans for a long outlook—a quarter of a century at least, and stay to see them carried out.

"I believe that a study of parish plans, associating charges together so that missionary subsidy could give a good account of itself, would be helpful. Then I believe that we should seek to develop a strong self-reliance, a higher degree of optimism in estimating

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our local resources. If a farmer only tills a little corner of his farm he will need help to get by. It is thus that much of our work has been done I fear. If only our folks would not think the first thing about what the boards of the church can do for us, but turn to a careful survey of local resources, I believe there would be many more self-supporting churches than at present."

## CHAPTER XXI

# Home Missions Saves the Church

"THE edge of settlement as emigration moved West from the Atlantic seaboard," that is the classic definition for the frontier. It was always an ever-moving and vanishing romance to the home-missionary worker, but now the "edge of settlement" has passed out. The frontier is no more.

The contribution of home missions to frontier life make a happy chapter in church history. But in return, frontier life has vitalized the church and the nation. Organized religion always has a tendency to sterility and fixity. Frontier conditions saved us from this tendency. Frontier life is close to nature. It is passionate and elemental. So its reactions are not mental and coldly calculating, but emotional and living. The frontier also gave us a laboratory for experimentation in new methods. The West was always breaking up that which was nice, traditional, and customary. The frontier church gave a continual urge for more democracy in the ecclesiastical systems. It also had a great leveling influence. Man was valued for his real worth rather than for his wealth. Then the crying demands for money on the broad frontier lines cultivated a generosity and a benevolence among Christian people which has made American Christians the most liberal people of all history.

"Eliminate from western society the silent moral

## HOME MISSIONS SAVES THE CHURCH

forces, all of them practically of home-mission churches; the respect for law which they inculcated; the temperance which they taught and helped to enforce; the safeguarding of the young; the security of life and property; the cultivation of high moral ideals; the claim of humanity which they taught and practiced—blot out all these forces which make up the morale of the commonwealth, socially, morally, religiously, and something of the unmeasurable value of the home-missionary movement as related to order, morality, civic virtue, and natural prosperity, would be appreciated."

## CHAPTER XXII

# The New West

IT WAS not the conservative and finely-cultured people who made American history. Most of the virile history of America was made by illiterate and uncultured men. They wore coarse garb and used rude weapons. "Not statesmen, but rifle-men and riders made America." But these pioneers were at heart men of idealism and heroism. From this crucible of the pioneer West has come a new West. A new type. A new people. A new American. Some would say, the American or the very essence of Americanism.

As we have tried to show in this book by true stories and by actual missionary history the church has had much to do with the making of the new West. The church survived the hardships of the mining frontier. The desperate conditions of the cow country challenged us and we produced a preacher for these conditions. We learned how to preach the gospel to the Indian. We produced a frontier technique, we developed a frontier evangelism, and produced a frontier Christianity which was warmly Christian, tolerantly orthodox, and healthfully independent and modern. Our greatest souls sacrificed careers and personal ambitions to win the frontier.

Now to the winning of the new West! Have we the sacrificial spirit and the culture and the inclination



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for this new task? Have we the spirit that dominated the pioneers in 1872?

The winning of the new West, outside of a few large mining centers, is a Protestant task. The winning of the new Montana for Christ is mostly a task for the Methodists, the Presbyterians, the Congregationalists. Are we strategists enough, are we fervent evangelists enough, are we religious teachers strong enough now to lay the permanent religious foundations for the people who have come and really built the new West? Are we willing to unite our forces and prevent waste by overlapping?

Are the missionary boards awake to the missionary strategy necessary for the new West? Will the boards be willing to change their old policy of doling out missionary money to struggling "last hopes"? Are they ready to help us put Christ more largely into the horizon of the new West? Are they willing to back the men of intellect and culture and spirituality who are working now in this field, often discouraged, and working as hard as the pioneers ever did? Are we ready really to Christianize and socialize the new West? Are we willing to pay the price in men and money? Or shall we allow this most interesting, world-wise, cynical, weather-beaten, product of the frontier melting-pot to become pagan? Shall we fail to build a dynamically Christian civilization as the superstructure on the broad and generous foundation built in by the Van Orsdel's and the Riggins and Littles?

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